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# SOCIAL IDEALS IN ENGLISH LETTERS

BY

VIDA D. SCUDDER

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE MODERN ENGLISH POETS"

*New and Enlarged Edition*

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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TO MY MOTHER
H. L. S.
AND MY FRIEND
L. H. S.

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# SOCIAL IDEALS IN ENGLISH LETTERS

## FOREWORD

THIS book is to consider English literature in its social aspect. It will study the imaginative expression of some of the most interesting moments in the long struggle by which democracy and freedom are slowly realizing themselves, and the earth is becoming in substantial sense the heritage of all the children of men. We are living to-day in one of the most dramatic periods of that great struggle. Year by year adds new episodes to its history both written and unwritten, and quickens in earnest minds the sense of the special responsibility borne by our generation toward its solution.

To allow the social questions which preoccupy us to invade even our enjoyment of poetry, essays, and novels may seem uninviting and needless; for many of us have a way of turning to books as an escape from life and its sorrows and puzzles. Yet if we are to dwell with pain and problem in considering the social bearing of some representative English books, we are to dwell with beauty also. Great literature is always the record of some great struggle; and it is wonderful testimony to life's essential blessedness that, no matter how

agonizing the struggle, it becomes a source of undying joy when translated into art. However strenuous the problems of life may be, however dark its issues, the world lingers on them with a pain that is delight, when once they are expressed by a noble artist. The fatal wrath of Achilles, the tortures of Dante's Francesca, the remorse of Macbeth, the sorrow of Lear, are records of experiences supremely terrible; and they are numbered among the chief treasures of the race.

Therefore we need not shrink from watching, in some few phases of our literature, the expression of social life with its anomalies, and social ideals with their wistfulness, or even, at times, of social despair. For "art sees as God sees," and is therefore always calm, blending all phases of fear and strife into a lovely whole. This it does, not from heartlessness, but from its recognition of eternal values, and also from that mysterious compulsion which enables, yes, forces it, through harmony of form, to subdue all discord of subject. And so it is good to look at the questions that beset us, at the wrongs that torment us, through their reflection in art. We shall not be hardened into carelessness by so looking. The better thought of our generation, signaled as it is by the growth of a great compassion, is in slight danger of indifference, or of æsthetic frivolity. Rather, we need to preserve our recognition of true values and proportions, our real as distinguished from our morbid delicacy of feeling, — in a word, our sanity. This larger view, this purer sense, we are at

least helped to gain by looking at things that grieve and distress us, not only directly, but as they have been felt and rendered through noble art.

In earlier times, the struggle which literature records is chiefly individual. We see men subduing the earth, facing their human foes, wrestling with supernatural terrors, seeking the love of women. This is the aspect of literature which has interested people most; nor will it ever — needless to say — be superseded. Yet as time goes on and the race grows older, another aspect becomes more and more evident. Literature is a series of social documents. It shows the exceptional individual contending with his environment; it also shows, more and more as time goes on, in that very environment the expression of a larger life. The individual becomes the type. At first he is the type of a phase of character, as Hamlet stands for all Hamlets; later, and this is characteristic of the literature of our own day, he becomes the type of a class, or social group. The epic, the drama, and later the novel, reveal the collective experience of the nation from age to age. The lyric, with all its intimacy, gives us not only the private heart of the singer, but also the common heart of his people and his time. When the fervor of living has abated a little, so that men can pause to consider life, criticism appears, and accents, with a sharpness that no one can mistake, the characteristic qualities and defects of the general civilization around it. In all this literature, humanity itself

is the protagonist; and its great fortunes, spiritual and material, appeal to the trained, though not to the untrained, imagination with mighty and unrivaled power.

Moreover, great books have a double value. They show life itself under various phases, and they also show the ideals which that life generates; the present, and that higher yet unrealized truth, which the present ever suggests, toward which it ever moves. They speak to us with "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come." And so, rendering alike the actual and that ideal in the actual which spurs to the future, they lead us to gain a sense of the lines of progress to be gained in no other way. We get absorbed in the mood and passion of the moment. But literature gives us mood after mood of the human race, related, succeeding, advancing. One cannot watch the growth of conviction in any line without a certain sense of fatality, a consciousness that, while each individual thought seems to play in freedom, like each bird in the mysterious migrations of spring and autumn, there is yet an inexorable impulse carrying onward the whole flock of thoughts toward a distant land. Literature makes us feel this totality of impulse. Discussion helps to form faith, action helps perhaps still more. But while in confused days both are good, it is also good to look back, and watch the tendencies manifest in those imaginative men who, as Wordsworth said, rejoice more intensely than other men in the spirit of life that is in them. As we follow from

one generation to another the dreamers who are the truest prophets, we shall trace the gradual awakening of a social consciousness, bringing with it the perception of social problems and the creation of social ideals; and in this consciousness we may find a continued power of selection and of persistence from which many things concerning the future may be inferred.

This splendid witness of literature to the organic character of human experience has been too much ignored. No one book can do more than glance at the rich subject. And any book which tries to do even as much as this must practice severe self-restraint in its choice of material. If it wishes to watch the social aspects of the literature of one country, as for instance of England, it must rigidly resist the strong temptation to draw upon the abundant illustrations and contrasts offered by the literatures of other lands: it may not even indulge in more than an occasional glimpse at the parallel growth of social ideals, a growth at once so like and so unlike that of England, in our own America. It must pass over whole periods with an allusion, and dismiss whole art-forms undiscussed. And yet even one book may show the possibilities of study. It may catch the reflection of social conditions and experiences at certain great epochs; it may signal points of primary importance in the gradual self-realization of society through the long centuries; and, in scrutinizing the literature which lies immediately behind our generation, it may perhaps even help the more direct and strenuous

social speculation which so absorbs us in these closing years of the century, for it may try to discover the trend of thought tentatively followed by that instinct of the seeking soul which will, after all, do more than any theories of the political economists to determine the social forms of the future.

# PART I

## THE ENGLAND OF OUR FOREFATHERS

## CHAPTER I

### WILLIAM LANGLAND AND THE MIDDLE AGES

I

DEMOCRACY entered Great Britain with the Church of Christ. A primitive people is always aristocratic; and "Beowulf," our earliest English epic, witnesses as vividly as the Iliad, and in much the same way, to the exclusive importance of the chieftains in a half-savage society. In this precious ancient poem, through which the Teutonic race sees dimly its heroic past, a village, slightly mentioned, lies to be sure somewhere in the background, but eyes are fixed on noble Heorot Hall, gold-timbered, fiend-ravaged, where the heroes feast and brag. In battle, the common people hardly exist even to be slain; in revel, the queen herself is cup-bearer, for no vulgar hand may minister to the princely warriors. Into this society, fiercely respectful toward the fighter with a pedigree, contemptuous toward the nameless churl, the chanting monks of Augustine, and earlier yet the Celtic missionaries with a Christianity of more childlike type, introduced a new ideal. Instead

of a social growth formed naturally, following human passion and instinct along the line of least resistance, men gained the idea of a society shaped in defiance of instinct, and in obedience to a higher power. Laying aside, with other more important matters, their princely standards and activities, the sons of the warriors rushed into the monasteries and bowed side by side with the sons of churl and serf, not only before the altar but over the furrow. With unspeakable gentleness and fervor, Christianity wrought in these wild natures a social revolution as amazing as the spiritual, and only less noted because assumed as a natural corollary of the work of grace. But surely, in one generation, to turn the haughty heroes, breathing flame against their foes, into peaceful agricultural laborers reclaiming waste lands, was not least of the miracles achieved by Holy Church. The early annals of monasticism, especially the ever-fresh and winning books of that most delightful of authors, the Venerable Bede, give us frequent glimpses of the new social attitude which the new faith swiftly fostered. Here, for instance, is the description of the monk Owini, a nobleman of rank, once prime minister of Queen Etheldrid: "As the fervor of his faith increased, resolving to renounce the world, he did not go about it slothfully, but so fully forsook the things of this world, that quitting all he had, clad in a plain garment, and carrying an axe and hatchet in his hand, he came to the monastery of that most reverend prelate called Lestingau, denoting that he did not go

to the monastery to live idle, as some do, but to labour, which he also confirmed by practise; for as he was less capable of meditating on the Holy Scriptures, he the more earnestly applied himself to the labour of his hands." [1] Here, again, is the story of the cousin of the great Benedict Biscop, the holy abbot Easterwine, in which Bede lingers lovingly on each detail of humility and gentle practical usefulness: "He was a man of noble birth; but he did not make that, like some men, a cause of boasting and despising others, but a motive for exercising nobility of mind also, as became a servant of the Lord. . . . And indeed, though he had been an attendant on King Egfrid, and had abandoned his temporal vocation and arms, devoting himself to spiritual warfare, he remained so humble and like the other brethren that he took pleasure in threshing and winnowing, milking the ewes and cows, and employed himself in the bake-house, the garden, the kitchen, and all the other labours of the monastery, with readiness and submission. . . . Oftentimes, when he went forth on the business of the monastery, if he found the brethren working, he would join them, and work with them, by taking the plough-handle, or handling the smith's hammer, or using the winnowing-machine, or anything of like nature. For he was a young man of great strength and pleasant tone of voice, of a kind and bountiful disposition, and fair to look on." [2]

[1] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, book iv. ch. v. trans., Bohn's Universal Library.

[2] Bede, *Lives of the Holy Abbots*.

These winsome stories, and many like them, come to us with double force when we realize that the period which they describe is not one in which barbarism had been fully conquered. Their date is that seventh century, when the wild paganism and savage impulses of our forefathers were wrestling, with result still uncertain, against the gentler ideals of the faith of Christ. Out of this century, which gives us such idyllic pictures of young monasteries crowded with humble saints, come also the dark and fearsome dreams of Northern heathendom, — "Beowulf" and the "Story of the Volsungs," — mythic tales, full of monsters and dragons and of heroic types singularly primeval and fierce.

The social influence of the Church was felt in many ways. Much that she found, she simply subdued and adopted. The strenuous passions, the wild loyalty of comradeship in the old tribal relations, were transmuted into a range of feeling wider, gentler, more subtle. Of sympathy, for instance, there is little or none in the heathen dreams of Celt or Saxon; no sooner is Christianity introduced than a new tenderness, exquisitely potent, a sense of fellowship with all living things, breathes like a strain of melody through the harsh tumult of existence. The very beasts and birds are included, as they were to be later by St. Francis and later still by Burns, in this sweet democracy of feeling. The story of the sleek otters who crept up to warm the feet of St. Cuthbert, chilled by his night-long penance of standing in the cold surf, is

only one of the lovely tales which attest the nearness of the innocent lives of the old monks, newborn into the childhood of the heavenly kingdom, to the innocence of animal life. Visions are again and again vouchsafed to these pure souls, as they plough their fields or sow their gardens; but these visions concern the monks themselves less often than their distant friends, to whom they are always near in spirit. Nor is their tenderness limited to their comrades. A mystic tie binds the old saints to all the desolate, and their ministry implies a constant consciousness of the poor and humble. Thus St. Columba suspends conversation to rejoice in ecstatic contemplation of the ascent to heaven of the soul of an old blacksmith, who, having worked hard all his life, is now borne upward gently by a choir of angels: and we find the Saint constantly aware by intuition of the perils of his spiritual children, sailors on the tempestuous Northern seas.

No records, indeed, show the new ideals more vividly than the life of St. Columba, as told by his early biographer, Adamnan. The glorious poet-saint, most engaging figure of Celtic tradition, when he had renounced the warlike frenzy of his youth and become a leader in the creative arts of peace, converted men to practical usefulness as well as to supernatural hopes. Through the lovely legends of his power over the forces of nature, we see gleaming the no less lovely truth, that he irrigated the land and developed the culture of fruit-trees. Settled on his barren island of Iona, from

which spiritual light streamed out over all that barbarian world, he formed with his monks an agricultural community of which we have idyllic pictures. "His entire life," says Montalembert, "bears the marks of his ardent sympathy for the laborers in the fields. From the time of his early travels as a young man in Ireland, when he furnished the ploughmen with ploughshares, and had the young men trained to the trade of blacksmith, up to the days of his old age, when he could only follow from far off the labor of his monks, his paternal tenderness never ceased to exercise on their account its salutary and beneficent influence. Seated in a little wooden hut which answered the purpose of a cell, he interrupted his studies and put down his pen, to bless the monks as they came back from the fields, the pastures, or the barns. The younger brethren, after having milked the cows of the community, knelt down with their pails full of new milk, to receive from a distance the abbot's blessing, sometimes accompanied by an exhortation useful to their souls."[1] The death of the old saint was harmonious with his life. In the end of May, he was drawn, by oxen harnessed to a rude cart, to the western side of the island, where his monks were working in the fertile fields. Standing in his cart, he tenderly blessed them and their island home. On the way back, he met, embraced, and blessed his old white horse, which carried the milk from the dairy. His last message sent to his

[1] Montalembert, *The Monks of the West*, book ix. ch. vi.

spiritual children was in the words: "Let peace and charity, a charity mutual and sincere, reign always among you."

One sees from such stories the fervor with which the fraternal ideal of peace, love, and labor sought to supplant the wild glory of combat and destruction. Never is the central purpose of Christianity so manifest as when we see the faith in its purity, not yet contaminated from within, contending with a dark barbarism like that of our forefathers. Its influence, when thus seen, is clearly toward social equality, toward simplification of desires, toward common, active, loving fellowship in the productive arts of peace. "Brotherhood" is a term of real and normal meaning in the old monastic communities, and the heathen attitude which set Nature at defiance as a malign and hostile power is replaced by a spirit of warm and tranquil friendliness toward the whole creation. A restored harmony is established between man and the fertile earth, between man and his fellow-men.

II

Only for brief periods, can we ever trace the influence of an untainted Christianity. As the Church conquers, she falls, and no sooner is the world at her feet than it is in her heart also. Already, in the naive records of the Anglo-Saxon Church, we find the Roman passion for dominion and administration reaching out from Italy to the British Isles, and prevailing, not without a dramatic struggle, over the evangelical simplicity and

slightly organized consecration of the native Christians, Celtic and Saxon. One of the first results of this victory was a loss of that social ideal of Christian poverty and simplicity which is always antagonistic to ecclesiastical aggrandizement. The monasteries soon degenerated. They became grasping and tyrannical centres of the material possessions of the Church, the frequent resorts of laziness, luxury, and ambition. Even the ninth century saw them past the pure devotion of their prime, and in the tenth they had sunk low. Yet at their worst they continued to present an example of common life for common ends, and at their best they preserved, in ideal at least, through the feudal period with its sharp class-articulations, the tradition of a pure Christian communism, vowed to democratic fellowship and to personal poverty. Every now and then, a renewed religious impulse would restore the ancient standards of unworldliness: and monasticism would recall once more for a time the simple beauty of the community life of the first disciples.

The most important of such revivals was unquestionably the Franciscan movement of the thirteenth century. Then lived St. Francis, and wooed and won the Lady Poverty for his spiritual bride. No wonder if his lovely life, and that of his immediate followers, held an inspiration that spread rapidly over the whole of Europe. A pure and vital part of this inspiration was an impassioned revival of the social with the spiritual fervors of Christianity It was the wise provision of the saint of Assisi,

whom one suspects to have had more common sense than the world credits him with, that the poverty of his brethren was to be a condition, not of sentimental indolence, but of hard self-supporting toil. He not only built a church with his own hands as first sign of his conversion, he set his spiritual children at real manual work, from cooking to ploughing. Like the barbarian warriors of an earlier age, the young nobles and merchant princes of Italy tested their religious consecration by their readiness for useful menial tasks. "I worked with my hands," says the precious, authentic will of St. Francis, "and I wish to continue so to do, and I wish that all the other brothers should work at some honest trade. Let those who have none learn one, not in order that they may be paid wages for their work, but to set a good example and avoid laziness. And when people will not pay us for our work, then let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms from door to door."[1]

Soon, this sane and protecting provision slipped out of the Franciscan rule, and the wholesomeness of the movement, which had started as a return to nature and simplicity as well as to God, was lost in wild excesses. No similar revival followed, and the degeneration of monastic life seemed complete and final. By the fourteenth century, the mendicant orders, which had adopted the last suggestion of St. Francis in the clause just quoted, without marking its restrictions, had become an

[1] Sabatier, *Life of S. Francis*, ch. x.

unmitigated nuisance. Their wandering throngs infested Europe with pauper laziness masquerading as sanctity, and formed perhaps the largest constituent in that wide-spread anarchy and lawlessness which not even feudalism could suppress.

For the later Middle Ages faced sharp contrasts. They possessed a social structure immutably fixed, but through this structure roamed hosts of ne'er-do-weels, setting at defiance its restrictions, and rejecting privileges only to prey upon the privileged. This constant sight was probably one reason why mediæval thought embodies a deep regard for property and class distinctions; for nothing so increases the self-satisfaction of privilege as the presence of misery unwilling to work. Be the cause what it may, no more aristocratic literature exists than that of the Middle Ages. Romances of chivalry and legends of the saints agree in showing as fine a disregard of the commons as do the old epics of heathendom. Men turned indeed to humble life for broad jest and merry tale, but noble sentiments apparently stirred in knightly breasts alone, and only fine ladies had fine manners. Chaucer is the only poet who makes common folk live with a substantial personal existence; and even Chaucer loves his Wife of Bath, his Reeve and Miller and Ploughman, with the love of an artist rather than of a brother. Nor would his characters have resented his attitude. They accepted their inferior roles meekly; parts of a feudal system sure of its own finality, and little likely to foster social discontent. From the eleventh

through the sixteenth century, the wide world of story-telling is uninvaded by questioning as to the divine right of the things that be.

III

Yet through the seeming solidity of mediæval life ran from the first waves and ripples of revolt. They proceeded in large measure from the intellectual proletariat, the students, lay and cleric, of the young universities. These students formed a roving Bohemian class, effervescent, impudent, full of aversion to respectability and boredom. They were called "Goliards," after their absurd imaginary head, a Bishop Golias. Their jolly songs, written in a jumble of French and Latin, dashed in frolicsome and bitter foam against the firm authorities of Church and State. It is curious to pore over these Goliardic lyrics in their dead languages, and through their obsolete slang to hear mockery as fresh and social satire as keen as any socialist student in Germany or France could troll out to-day. Sometimes the followers of the good Bishop wrote in prose, and clever, scathing prose it could be, as a quotation from one of their parodies will prove:

"The beginning of the holy gospel according to Marks of silver: At that time the Pope said to the Romans: 'When the son of man shall come to the seat of our majesty, first say, Friend, for what hast thou come? But if he should persevere in knocking without giving you anything, cast him into utter darkness.' And it came to pass, that a certain clerk came to the court of the lord the

Pope, and cried out, saying, 'Have pity on me at least, you doorkeepers of the Pope, for the hand of poverty has touched me. For I am needy and poor, and therefore I seek your assistance in my calamity and misery.' But they hearing this were highly indignant, and said to him: 'Friend, thy poverty be with thee in perdition; get thee backward, Satan, for thou dost not savour of those things which have the savour of money. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt not enter into the joy of thy lord, until thou shalt have given thy last farthing.'

"Then the poor man went away, and sold his cloak and his gown, and all that he had, and gave it to the cardinals, and to the doorkeepers, and to the chamberlains. But they said, 'And what is this among so many?' And they cast him out of the gates, and going out he wept bitterly, and was without consolation. After him there came to the court a certain clerk who was rich, and gross, and fat, and large, and who in a tumult had committed manslaughter. He gave first to the doorkeeper, secondly to the chamberlain, third to the cardinals. But they judged among themselves that they were to receive more.

"Then the lord the Pope, hearing that the cardinals and the officials had received many gifts from the clerk, became very sick unto death. But the rich man sent him an electuary of gold and silver, and he was immediately made whole. Then the lord the Pope called before him the cardinals and officials, and said to them, 'Brethren, see that

no one deceive you with vain words. For I give you an example, that, as I take, so take ye also.' "[1]

The Goliardic literature was mostly inspired by mischief. It expressed the light and reckless mood of Bohemia, a mood always present, never profoundly operative. Of weightier significance, as interpreting the mind of the whole people, were the great animal epics, produced chiefly in the twelfth century. These immense anonymous satirical works gathered as unobtrusively as clouds in the clear mediæval air. The most comprehensive of them, "Reynard the Fox," veiled audacious and sweeping social criticism under its entertaining allegory. The different feudal personages or classes appear under the guise of animals: Noble the Lion-king, always mentioned with respect; Isengrin the baron-wolf, grim as his name; Reynard the fox, in friar's habit. Among these symbolic beasts, no active role is assigned to the people. They come upon the stage as the fat and innocent geese, whom Reynard always pursues, and to whom on one occasion he addresses, with sanctimonious whine, the touching words: "God is my witness how deeply I long after you all in my bowels." But, if the people are seldom on the stage, the whole enormous poem is written from their point of view. It is good-humored and acquiescent; but it reveals with relentless mockery the double oppression suffered by the poor at the hands of the Church and the nobles.

[1] Thomas Wright, *History of Caricature and Grotesque*, ch. x. p. 172.

Neither the Goliardic poetry nor the animal epics were of high importance as literary forms. In the vast meanderings of mediæval imagination, they disappear from sight. Moreover they were not written in English, nor as a rule did they originate in England. They serve simply to suggest that even under the most rigid social surface restless impulses are sure to be at work.

IV

Such impulses, in England of the fourteenth century, gathered into a wide-spread mood of protest. Times were dark, conditions bad. The Middle Ages were dying. A brief industrial prosperity, consequent on the Black Death and the French wars, had quickened the intelligence of the English working-classes; harsh and unjust statutes were awakening them to a new class-consciousness, and to deep indignation against industrial wrongs. Out of a great darkness springs the first self-expression of the people; and the social literature of England begins. A fervid, mournful, wonderful book inaugurates it: "The Vision of Piers the Plowman." Of the authorship we know little. Possible writers are largely conjectural, and it is mainly from convenience to-day that the long poem passes under the name of William Langland. Personality evades us in the leisurely stretches of the great work. Perhaps it is just as well; for the book is not the voice of one, but of many, of a mighty throng: it is the voice of the people, articulate at last. Their joys and their sorrows speak

through it; their perplexed brooding over life's inequalities, their large charity, breaking now and again into exceeding bitter cry. Its burden is one which we often think the prerogative of our own age, — the investiture of labor with a religious significance, the glorification of poverty, the conscious, unanswerable, piteous plea for the brotherhood of man. All this it uplifts into its Christianity, a faith mystic in fervor and simplicity, unrelated to ecclesiasticism or to temporary forms. "For our joy and our healing," says Langland, "Jesus Christ of heaven, in a poor man's apparel, pursueth us ever, and looketh on us in their likeness, and that with lovely cheer."

Probably no book has ever more deeply stirred the heart and soul of the generation for which it was written, or won for the time being a more widespread fame. The merry charm of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" afforded infinite delectation to a reading public of Church and clerkdom. But it is one thing to reach the public, quite another to reach the people; and the more difficult achievement was Langland's. His grave verse went straight to the heart of the still Teutonic race, indifferent to the facile French lilts of Chaucer. Serfs and laborers, seemingly inaccessible to influences of culture, as they staggered along under their heavy loads, eagerly welcomed the Visions of Piers the Plowman, of Do Well, Do Better, and Do Best. They heard, pondered, and repeated, till they realized that their souls had found utterance at last. The central version of the great

poem — it comes to us in three distinct forms — antedated by only two or three years the Peasants' Revolt under Wat Tyler and John Ball This was the first largely significant prophecy in England of a distinct industrial movement. Its inspiration was no gentle Christian idealism, such as stirred the followers of St. Francis, but a spirit of fierce rebellion, flinging itself with awakened intelligence and destructive ardor against established law. The first note of the social revolution is heard in its confused echoes. No one can trace the thrilling story of its hope and passions, and fail to see how potent had been the poem of Langland in arousing and shaping its ideals. Phrases from the poem were used as watchwords in the uprising; more than this, the central personage, the intensely conceived Piers the Plowman, became a spiritual presence to the laboring classes of England. In those days before telegram or press, association was difficult; this poem, quietly passing from lip to lip, helped bind together the scattered and voiceless workingmen of the eastern counties with a new sense of fellowship. Langland was thus a direct power, as few poets have ever been, upon an awakening national life.

The revolt failed. The class-struggle, of which it was one of the first and most picturesque expressions, was doomed to fail, whenever resumed, for many a century. Times passed, conditions changed. The poem of Langland was forgotten. Nor was any other destiny possible to it. Consciously or unconsciously, Langland rejected all

elements of the common life offered from above, from culture, learning, knighthood. His "Visions" are uncouth, primitive, amorphous; redolent of the soil, but heavy with it as well. He wrote in a revival of the old alliterative metre dear to his Saxon forefathers; and the movement of his verses is that of the laborer in the field, not that of the lady in the dance: —

> "Duke of this dim place, anon undo the gates,
> That Christ may comen in, the kingë's son of heaven."

It was a noble metre; it had held sway over English poetry for six hundred years, — a far longer reign than that of the heroic blank verse, its upstart successor. Splendid passions had found expression in its surging, swaying lines. Yet when Langland chose it for his vehicle it was already doomed. Its grave inward music, its slow unrelieved majesty, were of pure Teuton strain. They could not satisfy the community into which was gradually filtering from above a new element and a new spirit. For the Norman knew what the Anglo-Saxon had never imagined, — that existence could be amusing. England was awakening to the discovery. She craved the Frenchman's wit and romance, his instinct for grace and ease, his courtly emphasis on manners as a good in themselves, apart from morals. What she craved, she gained. "The Canterbury Tales" are of the same half-century as "The Vision" of Langland; and still the wayfaring man may rejoice in their fresh romance and bewitching melody, while the solemn measures of Chaucer's brother-poet chant to the scholar and

the seeker alone. Art knows no classes; and the self-expression of a class, though that class be the very heart of the nation, cannot be immortal. This is the book of the people; and the people, even when thinking, feeling, seeing aright, is yet unable, except by occasional chance, to find the inevitable word. The burden of the popular heart remains forever undelivered. This book is like all others that seek to give it. Sharing the people's sorrows, it shares also their fate: it is forgotten.

Yet despite uncouthness, no sturdy lover of poetry and humanity can afford to ignore the old book. It may not be literature, for it lacks the selective and controlling instinct of art, but it is full to overflowing of the stuff from which literature is made. Langland has the heart of the poet, and fervent imaginative conceptions struggle through his awkward form. If we have patience with him, there emerges slowly to our ken a temperament rare and full of interest. Dreamer and visionary like most of the men of his time, he almost alone among mediæval authors dreamed the dreams neither of knight nor monk, but of the people; and the people are never far from the salutary neighborhood of the actual. At times his solemn spiritual symbols suggest the lovely work of Giotto; at others, he shows us pictures grotesquely concrete as Teniers ever painted. He is both mystic and realist; for his mysticism is not of the Celtic type, nurtured on fantastic shadows, far less of that Oriental type which creates around itself a void. It is instinct with the vigorous sin-

cerity of the Teuton, observes without illusion or glamour the homeliest facts, yet charges those facts with a vision-like solemnity, and uplifts them into enduring significance.

One questions whether Langland need have failed as an artist had he lived when prose was developed as a literary form; for his work has more in common with prose than with poetry. Swift and Carlyle would have handled their material awkwardly enough had the exigencies of their times made them write in verse; and it is with such men as these that our bewildered spirit of the fourteenth century must be placed. His massiveness of thought, the satiric bent of his genius, his large, sad interest in the wider conditions of humanity, bring him into their ranks and separate him from the children of melodious joy. To put Langland beside Chaucer is to put Carlyle beside Tennyson. Indeed, Langland curiously resembles Carlyle. So striking is the likeness that one could almost believe the stern Scotch prophet to have heard and echoed the strain dropped centuries before by the sad lips of the mediæval sage. Each in his day paused, questioning, at a turning of the ways. As Langland stood between England Catholic and feudal and England Protestant and commercial, so Carlyle, five centuries later, stood between the individualistic period of democracy and another order, which we as yet hardly dare to formulate, but toward which we surely move. Both Carlyle and Langland were at once conservative and radical; each, longing for peace, became a destructive

power; the work of each was deeply prophetic, and reached out among forces and tendencies which the seers themselves were able only dimly to understand. They were two voices crying aloud in two desert centuries: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his paths straight;" "make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

The two authors share the impulse to flash their truth on the world, not as argument but as picture; but the figures of speech of the modern world were the visions of the Middle Ages, and what Carlyle saw as metaphor, Langland saw as fact. His work is a series of symbolic dreams. Only the valiant lover of books can thoroughly explore the wide wilderness of allegory in which wanders this brooding soul; but any lover of life can discover and follow the central thread of story which is the clue to his social and spiritual faith.

Rightly read, the book is a "Pilgrim's Progress" of the fourteenth century. The chief symbol, constantly appearing in its mazes, embodies the undaunted quest for truth. But to set "The Vision of Piers Plowman" beside the beautiful classic of Bunyan, also a vision, is to feel the lapse of generations, and to recognize a revolution in ideas. The accent of the great Puritan book is intensely individualistic; wife, children, neighbors, society are forgotten and deserted by the pilgrim in the absorbing search for personal salvation. In the Catholic pilgrimage, on the contrary, the accent is social. It is salvation for all men, not only in heaven hereafter, but on earth as in heaven, which

the dreamer urgently, plaintively seeks. The protagonist of the poem is no projection of his private consciousness, no individual; but the Working-People, embodied in the sturdy figure of Piers the Plowman, the Laborer appearing for the first time upon the world's stage, not as buffoon, but as hero. Piers is the representative of the agricultural class on whom the welfare of England rested. This "Christian" has for his aim no less a task than the organization of society in accordance with the will of God; and he does not rest till he leads all classes after him in the pilgrimage to the far city of truth. None of the Goliardic poetry with its clever gibes, none of the satirical animal epics, hold so subversive a suggestion as this reverent and conservative poem, which in the ages of dominant feudalism presents the workingman as heart and centre of the social order.

V

Let us follow the story of the Plowman. He does not appear till men are ready to receive him; when he comes, it is to find a penitent world. In a "field full of folk" the Dreamer sees assembled a motley throng: knights, merchants, friars, minstrels, beggars, pilgrims, weavers, tailors, and other craftsmen, and cooks crying "Hot pies, hot! go dine, go dine!" All these people are listening to very queer sermons preached to them by Reason and Repentance; and strange to say, the whole assembly is converted. Even the Seven Deadly Sins, so optimistic is our writer, are conscience-

stricken and seek to be shriven. Repentance, who will place no limits to the Divine Forgiveness, prays for them in words of quaint and touching beauty, his tender pleading interspersed by the cadenced pathos of Latin chants from Holy Writ; and at the end Hope blows a horn with high, sweet note. "Beati quorum remissæ sunt iniquitates," while all the saints in heaven sing at once the praises of the mercy of God. And all the sinners, crying for grace, make vow of pilgrimage, — a strange, new pilgrimage, neither to Canterbury nor Walsingham, nor Jerusalem nor even Rome: a pilgrimage to truth.

> "A thousand of men then thronged together
> Cried upward to Christ and His clean Mother
> To have grace to go with them Truth to seek."[1]

But the Middle Ages are not used to this pilgrimage, despite their hosts of holy places; and no one knows the way. The pilgrims "bluster forth as beasts over banks and hills," wandering distraught and unguided. At last they meet a Palmer, capitally described, plastered all over with holy signs. He has been in Ermonye and Alexandria, as you may see by the shells sitting on his hat; he has walked full wide in wet and dry, seeking God's saints for his soul's health. The company eagerly ask guidance from him; does he know a "Corsaint" men call Truth? Can he tell them the way where that wight dwells? But no! The Palmer stares at them in surprise. Nay — so God him help — he saw never palmer with pike or staff ask after him ever,

[1] B Text, Passus V. l. 518.

till now, in this place. The pilgrim company stands irresolute and bewildered; when suddenly a rough and cheery voice is heard. It is the voice of Piers the Plowman. He comes in with real dramatic effect, and his honest accents are excellently given. "Peter!" says he, "I know Truth as well as a clerk does his book. I have been his follower these fifty winters. I have sowed his seed and driven his beasts. I dig and I delve. I do whatever Truth tells me; sometimes I sow and sometimes I thresh. In tailor's craft and tinker's craft I weave and I wind what Truth can devise. For though I say it myself, I serve him for pay. I have good hire from him. He is the promptest payer that poor men know. He is low as a lamb, moreover, and lovely of speech. And if you want to know where he lives, I shall show you the way."

These hardy, homely words, breathing the good fragance of the furrow, and boldly claiming fellowship with Truth, are the first utterance of the workingman in English literature. They are well worth noting. The poem now devotes itself to developing Piers' ideal function in the social order; and we should probably have to hasten down the centuries to the time of Tolstoi, to find any parallel to the conception broached. The pilgrims seek to hire Piers to lead them to the Truth he knows so well; but the Plowman prefers to stick to his work, and refuses bluffly; Truth would love him the less a long while thereafter if he took hire for such a cause. He gladly, however gives them directions, — long, delightful, allegorical direc-

tions, quite in the manner of Bunyan, — and promises them that when they come to the end of their journey, they will find "Truth sitting in thy heart in a chain of charity, as thou a child were." The people are eager to set forth, though the Cutpurse and the Apeward fear that they have no kin in Truth's country. The Pardoner — own cousin, surely, to Chaucer's pardoner with his "fire-red cherubim's face" — thinks that he also, perhaps, is not known there! He runs off for his credentials, a box of brevets and a bull with bishop's letters. But when he returns, behold, the company has started, and he is left behind, amazed! And so the Passus ends.

The next Passus leads us further into Langland's social thought and economic speculation; and extraordinary enough it is. The pilgrim company have not gone far. The way is complicated. They are discouraged and helpless for lack of a guide. Piers in pity has changed his mind. He wants to set out with them; but he cannot leave his work. "Had I only ploughed this half-acre, and sowed it afterwards," he cries, "I would wend with you and teach the way." Perhaps there is a modern suggestion in this emergency: the workingman, alone in a disconsolate civilization possessed of the secret of Truth, unable to share it because upon his shoulders rests the burden of the labor of the world. If so, no less modern is the hint of the way of escape and salvation. It is a fine lady who discovers it, — a lady fashionably dressed in a "sklayre" or veil. She demands to

be set to work, to hasten the waiting. The Knight follows suit. He is a delightful creation, Langland's Knight, charming in his way as Chaucer's, a gentleman every inch of him. He is eager to share Piers' toil. He never was taught, he says, to guide a team, but he will do his best if Piers will set him at it! Redistribution of labor, Langland hints, is the first necessity of the converted world. But no sooner has the Laborer-Lord fairly set his community to work than he is bothered by all sorts of economic problems. Worst of all are the lazy people or leisure class, — his pet detestation, the "wastours." They sit and sing "How! trolli lolli," while he is at the plough with his pilgrims; and when he remonstrates, they remark that they have "no limbs to labor with, thank God," "but we will pray for you, Piers, and for your plough," — a method of vicarious toil not yet out of fashion. Piers is very severe with these gentry; but he finds it hard to distinguish between them and the honestly incompetent. Poor Piers! He is facing what in modern parlance is known as the problem of the "dependent, defective, and delinquent classes." He is torn asunder between his sense of religious duty to them — "they are my bloody brethren, and God bought us all" — and his conviction that a little stout discipline is what they need. He tries to get the Knight to help him, but that gentle worthy is too courteous by half, and proves of no use at all. "'I was not wont to work,' quoth Wastour, 'and now will I not begin!' And set light of the law and less of the knight." Piers

finally decides the matter with mingled kindliness and keenness, providing for the really infirm after a fashion that suggests latter-day philanthropy, and subduing the rest by the grim but wholesome help of Hunger. This gaunt Servitor bids him let nobody actually starve, but if able-bodied men refuse to work, Piers is to give them only "hound's bread and horse's bread" and "abate them with beans;" and "if the men grumble, bid them go swink [labor], and they shall sup sweeter when they have deserved it." [1]

Hunger has other salutary and entertaining counsels to give, and Piers faces other industrial situations with a curiously prophetic note in them. But enough has been said to make the central idea of the poem plain. It is a sufficiently notable sight, — that quaint mediæval assembly, of merchants and lawyers and knights and priests and monks and jesters and ladies, enthusiastically submitting itself to arduous toil, and bending over the plough at the hest of its chosen guide, the Laborer. The picture would delight Ruskin or Tolstoi. The whole conception of the workingman, with God's simple wisdom in his keeping, set free to serve as guide to Truth by eager voluntary sharing in his toil on the part of all converted folk, is quite in a certain modern strain. Langland tells us nothing more about the pilgrimage to Truth. Perhaps even his imagination could not fly far enough to picture the time when productive work should be in such a shape that men should

[1] B Text, Passus VI. l. 217.

be free for speculation. Perhaps, and one likes the thought better, the pilgrims did not need to wander far, and even as they toiled with loom and plough, were rewarded by finding Truth sitting in their hearts.

VI

The working-people, typified in Piers, have already been exalted in this curious poem to a position which has hardly been thought of in the most advanced democracy. Comrades and intimates of Truth, they have the converted world as disciples, eager to share their toil. In them is vested the chief power of social reorganization. It is striking that this radical conception, which goes in a way the whole length of modern socialism, is handled with conservative moderation. Respect for king and aristocracy are salient features of Langland's work, and the profound spiritual and social revolution of which he dreams is to leave the framework of society unchanged. It is fruitless to inquire whether we have here central inconsistency or profound insight; but we cannot fail to ask by what right and from whose will such power is vested in the Laborer? The poem, as it proceeds, gives at least a partial answer to this question: for the idea of Piers is not yet fully developed. So far it has been economic and social; but Langland's thought can never long ignore the religious basis of life. His Christianity is the determining force of his whole work. It is Christianity of a curious and interesting order. He has the

Catholic conception of the Church as an organism at once social and religious, nor was he ever a conscious antagonist of the Church as an institution. At the same time, no authority shackles his thought. "I will seek Truth first, ere I see Rome," exclaims Langland. He has a horror of the material possessions and ambitions of the Church: "Bishops shall be blamed for beggars' sakes," he says, and his bitter outcry against the gift of Constantine echoes a nobler cry in Dante. "When Constantine of his courtesy Holy Church dowered with lands and deeds, lordships and rents, an angel men heard on high at Rome cry, 'Dos ecclesiæ' this day hath drunk venom, and those that have Peter's power are poisoned all."[1] It is the note constantly found in Wyclif. Langland accepts orthodox theology, but with puzzled spirit. "The more I muse therein, the mistier it seemeth," he sighs; "the deeper I divine, the darker me it thinketh." Deed, not dogma, is heart of faith for him, and Love is all his creed, "leech of life, and next Our Lord's Self." "Learn to love," says Nature at the end of the poem, "and leave of all other."

But of the old poet, Wordsworth's beautiful lines might have been written. "Love had he found in huts where poor men dwell." His Christianity finds central expression, not in priest, but in Plowman. He was possessed by the idea for which Protestantism was to fight many battles, the priesthood of the laity. As the poem advances,

[1] B Text, Passus XV. ll. 519–522. See *Inferno*, Canto XIX. ll. 115–117.

his hero Piers becomes vested more and more with religious significance and authority. In the seventh Passus, Truth sends to him a bill of pardon; and the Laborer becomes not only the secular but the religious Head of the community. The bull is lenient to good kings and knights, more severe on merchants and lawyers: but to honest laborers is granted full absolution.

> "All living laborers that work with their hands,
> That truly take and truly win,
> And live in love and law for their low hearts
> Have the same absolution that was sent to Piers."[1]

Sufferers also are tenderly exempt. But a priest comes along and challenges Piers' pardon; and when Piers at his prayer unfolds the bull, the poet standing behind reads simply two lines: "Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam, qui vero mala, in ignem eternam." The ecclesiastical authority, naturally enough, is far from satisfied. "'Peter!' quoth the priest, 'I can no pardon find, but do well and have well, and God shall have thy soul.'" Piers, much chagrined and a little perplexed, enters into discussion with the priest, and with the vexed sound of the argument — not yet concluded — between ecclesiastical authority and moral common sense, the Dreamer awakes.

The Visions, when renewed, start with the keynote just given, and seek to find what it is to Do Well. Leaving economic speculation and puzzle, they advance into ethical, metaphysical, and religious thought. The figure of the Plowman van-

[1] B Text, Passus VII. l. 62.

ishes in the mazes of the poem, and seems forgotten; but now and then his name, heard at some unexpected moment, brings comfort in the hour of spiritual stress, or causes the hearer to swoon for pure joy. When Piers does reappear at last, in the sixteenth Passus, he is transfigured and exalted. Always the type of a class, he has now become in the fullest sense a spiritual symbol, fraught with meaning; yet what deep imaginative brooding over the life and fate of the working-people has shaped his ideal destiny! He is the keeper of the mystic tree of Patience, whereof the fruit is Charity, which grows in the human heart. The sturdy character whom first we met as guide to Truth has become, by virtue of submission and endurance, guardian of Love also. But further glory awaits him. The strange poem advances into a symbolic rendering of the Passion and Resurrection: and, behold, there comes riding "One semblable to the Samaritan, and some del to Piers the Plowman," — Very Christ, the Son of David. Faith, who hails Him from a window, tells the poet in strange and mystic phrase that "Jesus shall joust in Piers' arms, in his helm and habergeon, humana natura." The Passion is accomplished: the Dreamer is in Church; and in midst of the Mass, he suddenly sleeps and beholds in vision Piers the Plowman, coming in with a Cross before the common people, marked with bloody wounds, "and like in all limbs to Our Lord Jesus."

It would be a mistake to suppose that by this extraordinary image, Langland meant exactly to

identify Piers with the Saviour of the world. To him the workingman is simply the best embodiment of the Christ idea. Once more the symbol changes: the glorified Lord ascends to heaven; and now Piers becomes the entire Christian body, literally and mystically vowed to labor, and composed of the meek of the earth. The homely quaintness of the agricultural imagery is continued in a curious way. On Piers descends the Spirit; his plough is drawn by the Four Evangelists, St. John being "the prize neat of Piers' plough." His barns are the Church of God, and he goes forth to sow the seed of the four cardinal virtues in the furrows of the world. The allegory leaves him defending the unity of the Church against many foes. A new story is developed, full of sorrow and foreboding; and at the very end Conscience, sore beset, takes up his pilgrim-staff, and starts weeping to wander wide over the world, till he find Piers the Plowman.

VII

The exaltation of the Laborer through the latter part of the poem is of course most striking. So strong is the contrast between the uncouth workman of the early Passus, with his rough and ready speech, and the majestic figure of the close, that some critics have supposed an abrupt change in Langland's thought and intent. Yet the more one studies the "Visions," the more one becomes convinced that the development of Piers, which is very carefully wrought, was in the author's mind from

the beginning. His deepest convictions and his most earnest thought find expression in the beautiful symbol of the Plowman-lord.

No intellectual theory of the state, but a spiritual attitude toward poverty and labor, determines Langland's social allegory. In reverence for poverty there was nothing strange to the mediæval mind. The Church had never ceased to recommend abstention from worldly goods as a counsel of perfection to her children; but the renunciation was to the end of contemplation rather than of useful activity, and contemplation may be dangerously near hysteria or idleness. What was distinctive in Langland was that the special type of poverty which he revered accompanied productive toil. Sacerdotal laziness was abhorrent to him. Charity was indeed, he admits, once found in a friar's frock, "but that was long ago, in St. Francis' time." He goes out of his way, in describing the Manger of the Nativity, to exclaim with naif satire, "If any friar were found there, I give thee five shillings!" His strong distaste, evinced again and again, for communistic schemes may doubtless be traced to his contempt for the friars, the only exponents of such schemes whom he knew. But from distaste for religious beggars he turns to no comfortable respect for vested interests or private property. Seeking over the world for the likeness of his Lord, he found it, not in the artificial rags and dirt of the friars, nor yet among the respectable well-to-do, but among the rough laborers of England.

Langland's work thrills with sorrowful consciousness of the difficult life of faithful working-people. He is alive to every detail of their condition: their wretched diet and shelter; their oppression by employer, usurer, and retail-dealer; their endless fatigue in toil. The Epic of the Workers has never been written, but Langland might have written it, had the gift of art been his. All the sympathy of his great heart goes forth to those who

> "played full seldom:
> In setting and in sowing swonken[1] full hard,
> And won that which wastours with gluttony destroyed."[2]

His grieving sense of their helplessness breaks into pitiful appeal to the Divine Compassion: —

> "Poor people, Thy prisoners, Lord, in the pit of mischief,
> Comfort Thy creatures that much care suffer
> Through dearth, through drought, all their days here.
> Woe in winter times for wanting of clothes,
> And in summer time seldom sup to the full;
> Comfort Thy careful, Christ, in Thy ryche[3]
> For how Thou comfortest all creatures, clerks bear witness."[4]

Nothing but the Infinite Pity can suffice for the infinite pathos of human life. To solve the terrible problems presented by the life of the poor, Langland has no power. The tone of his poem is bewildered and sad, at times all but hopeless. Yet as he broods there comes to him a great, a mystic thought of consolation. The laborers' service of humanity is revealed to him as a sacred thing. In labor and in poverty, honestly pursued and pa-

[1] Toiled. [2] B Text, Prologue, ll. 20–23.
[3] Kingdom. [4] B Text, Passus XIV. ll. 172–178.

tiently borne, he comes to feel a divine, a redemptive power. The poor become in his eyes not so much victims as saviours of the very society which ignores them. And so comes to pass his investiture of their lives with a religious significance and a spiritual glory. In the poverty of common folk, unromantic, homely, with no mark of sacerdotal aloofness from the general human lot, our first English social prophet beheld the likeness of Christ: —

"Therefore be not abashed to bidde and be needy,
Since He that wrought all the world was wilfully needy,
Never none so needy and none so poor died." [1]

"But well worth Poverty!
Our Prince Jesus Poverty chose, and His apostles all,
And aye the longer they lived, the less goods they had." [2]

"Why I move this matter is mostly for the poor,
For in their likeness Our Lord oft hath been known," —

as in the walk to Emmaus, when "for His poor apparel and pilgrim weed," the disciples knew Him not: —

"And all was in ensample to us sinful here
That we should be low and lovely of speech,
And apparel us not over proudly, for pilgrims are we all,
And in the apparel of a poor man, and pilgrim's likeness,
Many times God has been met among needy people,
Where never sage saw Him in suit of the rich." [3]

With this profoundly religious conception of poverty as an attribute of Christ Himself, it is no wonder if Langland not only finds comfort for the poor in that example, but presses it upon all men

[1] C Text, Passus XXIII. ll. 48–50.
[2] C Text, Passus XIV. ll. 1–3.
[3] B Text, Passus XI. ll. 224–237.

as the truest way to spiritual freedom. The Counsel of Poverty is the burden of his preaching; but the poverty for which he pleads is no sentimental ecstasy, but a voluntary consecration to productive work. His thought is akin to that so often found in modern art, which gives us a workman-Christ in the garb of our own poor.

Langland's respect for poverty springs in part from a conviction that the poor are, on the whole, likely to be better than the rich. Our modern instinct is rather the other way, and feels vaguely assured that poverty and vice are likely to be connected, and that it is more creditable to be well-to-do than poverty-stricken. Perhaps the Gospels lean a little to Langland's side. "Have mercy on these rich men, Lord, and of Thy Mercy give them grace to amend," cries the old poet, with a tenderness that transcends class limitations. "Were there not mercy in poor men more than in the rich, many times beggars might go hungry," "The rich clothe the rich, and help them that give help in return, as one might pour water on the Thames." Langland's Christianity, full of comfort and courage for the poor, is severe and serious in its tone towards the prosperous: —

> "For the rich hath much to reckon, and right soft he walketh
> The highway heavenward, oft riches hindereth.
> Then the poor presseth before, and boldly he craveth
> For his poverty and patience, perpetual bliss." [1]

The apostles bear witness, says Scripture to the Pilgrim, that the poor "have their heritage in heaven, and by true right, where rich men no right

[1] B Text, Passus XIV. ll. 209–214.

can claim but by ruth and grace." The Pilgrim rejoins with good orthodox perplexity that he has understood that every baptized person is safe, be he rich or poor; but Scripture informs him that this is *in extremis*, among Saracens and Jews. Only to the workers of the world, only to the simple-hearted, comes peace. Their ears alone, Langland tells us in a lovely passage, are open to the angelic tidings of great joy: —

> "To pastours and to poets appeared that angel,
> And bade them go to Bethlehem, God's birth to honor,
> And sung a song of solace, Gloria in excelsis Deo.
> Rich men rutte [1] then, and in their rest were,
> When it shone to the shepherds, a shewer of bliss." [2]

Even antiquity, queerly conceived, in mediæval fashion, bears witness to the superior value of the life without possessions: —

> "Aristotle, Ovidius, and eleven hundred,
> Tullius, Ptolemæus, I cannot tell their names,
> Prove patient poverty prince of all virtues." [3]

This is really the sum and substance of Langland's teaching.

The protracted poem wanders in many directions, exploring various byways of inquiry and experience, meeting many quaint fancies and keen perceptions. One may learn from it much concerning the thoughts of men of the fourteenth century on reward and bribery, on the relations of king to commons and knighthood, on natural science, on the fate of men after death, on marriage, on all the

[1] Snored. [2] B Text, Passus XII. ll. 150–154.
[3] C Text, Passus XIII. ll. 174–176.

large primal interests which go to make up living. But however Langland circles, he always returns to the same centre. His exact thought is sometimes hard to grasp, but his drift is always clear. Perplexed by life's inequalities, filled with deep compassion for suffering, he finds escape in faith, in simplicity of life, in fellowship with the humble. The absence of asceticism and the stress on utility give his ideal a curiously modern note. It is poverty like that urged by Tolstoi, which draws him. For unworldliness of this homely type he constantly pleads: —

> "All the wise that ever were, by aught I can espy,
> Praise Poverty for best, if Patience it follow."[1]

That mystical and spiritual reverence for labor and poverty as part of the Christian ideal, which is the very heart and centre of Langland's thought, probably lingered till long after his day. She who, to use Dante's noble phrase, had leapt with Christ upon the Cross, continued for centuries to cling in men's thought to the image of the Crucified. Only when the materializing influences of the Renascence had done their perfect work, did the world cease to feel that in the highest type of Christian life riches were abjured. The reaction toward simplicity in our own day is one of the most marked and unexpected phases of our spiritual and social growth. To Langland — first English poet to feel the stirrings of the social conscience — the only means of social salvation lies in the voluntary action of Christ's disciples. He has not much

[1] B Text, Passus XI. ll. 247, 248.

hope that the world will ever be made over, and injustice and oppression cease. A wistful patience is the spirit of his poem.

"To see much and suffer more, certes, quoth I, is to do well," he sighs. He has no wide-reaching schemes for social reconstruction, no ideals of a perfect state where freedom shall be the heritage of all men. With the constitution of things he has no affair. It is quite possible that he would have shrunk from the part his poem was destined to play in the Peasants' Uprising, and would have denounced the Reformation. Certainly he anticipates no sweeping change in the existent social order. The consolation he offers lies in no intellectual scheme nor political Utopia: but simply and solely in the enduring intuition of the heart, that God suffers and waits with His world. Says Reason, in words that strangely recall a similar strain in Browning's "Saul:" —

> "Why I suffer or not suffer, thyself hath nought to do;
> Amend thou it if thou might: for My time is to abide.
> Sufferance is a sovereign virtue and a swift vengeance.
> Who suffereth more than God? quoth he. No man, as I live.
> He might amend in a minute-while all that amiss standeth,
> But He suffereth for some men's good, and so is our better."[1]

Entering into the mystery of the divine patience, men may endure and wait. And meanwhile for all Christ's folk Langland has a message. He looks to Christianity as the one hope for social regeneration; he is perhaps the first Englishman thoughtfully to dwell on the social power of the

[1] B Text, Passus XI. ll. 368-373.

faith of Christ. His chief allegory relates, let us not forget, to people already converted, to the children of the Church. He calls upon them, not only to accept the word of their Lord, but to follow His example of love and labor, and to join the congregation of His poor. If obeyed, the appeal of the old poet would result in the formation of a sort of voluntary Christian socialism in the midst of a rigid social order and an unheeding world. This appeal is the first word of the social literature of England.

## CHAPTER II

### THE UTOPIA OF SIR THOMAS MORE

#### I

A LONG reach of years — nearly a century and a half — lies between the "Visions" of Langland and the "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More. A farther reach of spiritual distance separates the rude and wistful mediæval dreamer, who saw in the laborer at his task the image of the Saviour of the world, from the cultured statesman of the Renascence. More is the representative scholar of the New Learning of the sixteenth century. His winning personality and interesting career surprise us with an almost contemporary freshness, and show that we have passed from the mystery which makes the whole tone of mediæval life at once alluring and strange, to the modern atmosphere and the modern spirit.

Nothing is more distinctive in the period of the Renascence, nothing affords more remarkable witness to the individualism which it everywhere fostered, than the sudden appearance of distinct characters. We no longer look, as in mediæval annals, on shining arms or drooping cowl, half fearful lest they conceal shadows; we gaze straight into expressive faces, alert with intelligence, eager as we are eager, with the same note of question,

maybe, on the brow. This is the most marvelous effect of the art of Italy, when from the long bondage of the Dark Ages with their immobility of type, it leaps into freedom. Character, vigorously varied, fascinating, living, glances at us from the faded canvas of Ghirlandajo, of Botticelli, insists on being recognized as contemporary, and quietly establishes, as it were, a private understanding between itself and the observer.

The English renascence was widely different in type from the Italian: more ascetic, more sober, more Christian. No Borgias nor Medicis ruled in England, neither did any Raphael adorn the courts of Henry the Eighth and his daughters. Influences of the Reformation blended with those of the classic revival, to enhance the native seriousness of the Anglo-Saxon race. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, young scholars in Oxford and elsewhere were evolving a new spirit of reaction and intellectual freedom. They spoke not through art, but through eager speculation and learning. In the work of these men, just as in the great portraits of Italy, we feel real personalities, vivid, accessible, and human. If we know More, Colet, Erasmus, if we share their thoughtful schemes, listen to their jests, follow their diverse yet united efforts to "make reason and the will of God prevail," we enter one of the most delightful intellectual companionships of history. It is a company where all sense of distance is forgotten, in common interests, methods, and aims.

Among this little group of representative schol-

ars, More was perhaps not the cleverest, but he was assuredly the most lovable. Born in 1478, he grew up in the house of Cardinal Morton, where the general social conditions were not unlike those he was to picture in his great romance. He was a boy of promise, witty, sweet-tempered, equally eager in religion and in study. Admitted to the bar, he knew rapid promotion, and became reluctantly Vice-Chancellor to that uncertain person, Henry the Eighth. He served his master well and showed keen practical sense in statesmanship, proving, as Gladstone and many others have proved after him, that aptitude for the quiet life of the scholar is no bad preparation for a public career. Yet he found his joy, not in his political office with its cares and interests, but in an ideal domestic life, in charming colloquy with his scholar friends, above all in strenuous thinking and ceaseless religious devotion. He bore with equanimity and sweet courage the withdrawal of the king's favor and removal from office; steadfastly refused to deny his principles by ratifying the royal divorce from Catherine, or acknowledging the king as head of the Church; and died on the block in 1535, claimed by the Church as martyr to the Catholic faith, but also recognized by a wider intuition as martyr to the spirit of freedom.

II

The "Utopia" is the book of More's youth. And so vivid and so daring is it that its name has not only adhered to all similar romances, but has be-

come a household word. In some ways doubtless it loses, from the social point of view, if compared with the "Vision of Piers the Plowman." The "Vision" speaks from the people; the "Utopia" speaks for them. Langland has the impassioned sympathy of a comrade of the poor; More has the disinterested thoughtfulness of the scholar statesman. He has lived at the desk, not at the furrow; he moves among abstractions, and we infer rather than see the laborer in his work. But in compensation we know the author of the later book as we cannot know Langland. Through More's speculations shines a personality full of sweetness and light: humorous and worldly wise, yet pure and tender, swift in stern wrath, yet habitually suave. Langland's enormous book is the monument of an entire civilization, the symphonic expression of a mighty social class. More's short and compact work is the record of individual thought, to be accepted, criticised, discussed, on the same basis as the work of Matthew Arnold or William Morris. It is to all practical intents the book of a modern man. The "Utopia" is the first original story by a known English author. That this earliest English novel should deal with the romance, not of a private life, but of society at large, is curious enough; it is even more curious that this first coherent conception of an ideal social state in our literature should be the outcome of the new individualism of the Renascence.

But however much the author's stamp is upon it, the "Utopia," like every living book, is in closest

relation to its age. More is as much a dreamer in his way as Langland; but into his dreams have passed new memories and new hopes. Langland's mediæval eyes had seen with startling distinctness the field full of jostling fourteenth-century folk, but his landscape was sharply bounded, like the background of contemporary illuminations, by the tall tower of Truth on the one hand, on the other by the yawning pit of Hell. Far though clear in distant space sweeps around the wide horizon of the Utopia; it is bounded behind by the great world of antiquity, luminous with art and learning; fronting its shores, new continents, faintly discerned, wait in mystic silence to yield their secrets. The book was written in 1515 and 1516. It was a time when thought shared the audacity of action; and while material ships were invading the startled silence of southern waters, spiritual sails sped on their way, "voyaging in strange seas of thought alone," where discoveries greater than a visible New World were waiting.[1]

The charming invention which forms the setting of the "Utopia" is the story of a returned traveler. Raphael Hythloday, whose beautiful first name recalls the traveler-archangel, is an admirably distinct character. More draws him as a gentleman and a scholar. He represents a new type of unworldliness: for he has stripped himself of wealth and renounced the world, not from any ascetic Catholic impulse, but from the desire to be free to follow the life of thought without encumbrances.

[1] Compare *Faerie Queene*, book ii. prologue.

It is a type which from More's day to our own has now and again existed; and if its tranquil severance of ties and claims smacks at times of egotism, it has yet an appeal of its own. Its animus is assuredly that of the classic philosopher rather than that of the mediæval saint. Yet Hythloday's character is modulated to gentleness in its way by Christian influence. The double genesis of that exploring instinct which controls him is marked at once, with his introduction: he is a student of Greek philosophy; and he has traveled with Americus Vesputius.

The first part of Raphael's discourse breathes a buoyant sense of expansion. He tells of his journeyings, and airs from the land of Romance play through his descriptions; yet soon we realize that here is no tale of marvel, like the delightful unveracities of the old pseudo-Mandeville, but serious thought bent on grave theory, and inspired by interest in the various forms of human society. Those "wise and prudent institutions which he observed among civilized nations" claim the chief attention of Hythloday. "We asked him many questions concerning all these things, which he answered very willingly: only we made no enquiries after monsters, than which nothing is more common; for everywhere one may hear of ravening dogs, and wolves, and cruel men-eaters; but it is not so easy to find states that are well and wisely governed."[1] If, then, the book bears an open debt to the "Voyages" of Vesputius, — in

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, ed. by Henry Morley, p. 57.

which, indeed, suggestive descriptions are to be found of tribes that have all things in common and despise gold, — it is inspired even more fully by More's philosophical reading. Hythloday has remembered his Plato well while observing the Polylerits, the Achorians, the Zapolets, and the Utopians. The Utopians, noblest race of all, are of Greek origin, and throughout the book references to Greek thought and authorities are constant.

Times have changed indeed since Dante chose Vergil for his guide, and in his fellowship explored the world to come. The change of reverence bespeaks in itself a new era. For the tradition of Latin conservatism, the Roman stress on organization, institution, law, which lingered dimly through the Middle Ages, was giving way: its place was taken by eager interest in fresh theory, social and metaphysical, and by the free play of an inquiring consciousness around things as they were; in a word, by the revival of the Greek temper. The faded manuscripts from the library of Constantinople had quickened a new impulse toward intellectual liberty in the mediæval world. The tyranny of ecclesiasticism was over; and the secularization of thought, the intense interest in the world that now is, brought with it a courage that upheaved the foundations of faith, and reared, in dream at least, a new society.

III

The second of the two books that make up the "Utopia" is a straightforward account of the country of the Utopians. The first, which was written last, is a more direct criticism on the country of the English. This first book is of especial personal interest, for it was written just at the period in More's life when the recluse scholar was holding reluctantly back from the allurements to office and dignity held out to him by his bluff king.

The scene is laid in a quiet Dutch town, where Peter Giles, estimable citizen of Antwerp, Raphael the traveler, and More himself hold an imaginary conversation, centring in the effort to persuade Raphael to place his wide experience at the service of the state. With admirable humor More exposes the futility of the hope that a student and philosopher should ever, in the court of princes, make his unworldly notions prevail. There is something exquisitely urbane in Raphael's courteous annihilation of the earnest and reiterated arguments by which his friends seek to draw him to a life of action, and in his triumphant demonstration of the fact, "that there is no room for philosophy in the courts of princes."[1] It is probable that More was haunted, all the time that he was relieving his mind in this refreshing conversation, by a sense of its subtle selfishness; for he himself did not follow the sage counsels of Hythloday.

Besides the argument against public life, which

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 82.

is its connecting thread, the first book contains much enlightening criticism on the social conditions of the day. Hythloday has been in England "not long after the rebellion in the West Indies was suppressed, with a great slaughter of the poor people that were engaged in it." He reports a conversation held at the table of Cardinal Morton, the friend and patron of More's youth. The point of departure is the drastic penal laws that exact capital punishment for theft; despite which severity, so much had theft increased that often as many as twenty were hanging on a single gibbet. Hythloday goes swiftly behind phenomena to cause. With decisive clearness, he traces the existence of this huge criminal class to industrial conditions. He points out that the great wars had drafted men off from honest trades, and left them, in time of peace, a burden to the country; that the breaking-up of the vast feudal households, which was so rapidly proceeding in his day, threw upon the community throngs of idle servants, trained only to minister to the luxuries of the rich, demoralized in character, useless for purposes of productive labor; that finally, the rapid conversion of England into a sheep-grazing country — an industry which required vast territory and few hands — was ruining trades and agriculture, and creating vast numbers of helpless and unoccupied people. England, in a word, was confronted by the great problem of the Unemployed. The conditions producing such a class differed from those leading to a similar result in our own day; but More's discussion of the situa-

tion is amazingly modern. The offhand solutions of the difficulty were as superficial then as they are now; it would be well if all modern thinkers had as marked a union of patience with clear decision and keen insight, as is shown by the young statesman of Henry the Eighth. He points out the great danger to the nation of a large and growing class really unable from various causes to support itself by honest work; shows clearly the folly of trying to meet the problem by penal laws which seek to suppress the irrepressible, if unreasonable, clamor for life; and suggests that only fundamental and wise economic provisions will ever prove adequate to meet the evil, and that penology is in last resort only a branch of industrial science. "'There are dreadful punishments enacted against thieves,' said he, 'but it were better to make such good provisions by which every man might be put in a method how to live and so be preserved from the fatal necessity of stealing and of dying for it.' 'There has been care enough taken for that,' said his opponent; 'there are many handicrafts, and there is husbandry, by which they may make a shift to live unless they have a greater mind to follow ill courses.' 'That will not serve your turn,'"[1] says Hythloday, and then goes on to show the absurdity of supposing that untrained and ignorant labor can be effectively applied, haphazard, at any point of the industrial system.

Then after enlarging a little on certain detailed theories concerning the wise handling of crime,

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 61.

More rapidly passes to a deeper analysis of the evil at its very roots. In the concluding pages of this first book, he sweeps upward into a general indictment of the society of his day in its inward constitution and principle, an indictment so clear in restrained power, so uncompromising, so searching, that the most subversive and revolutionary modern critics could find nothing to add in the substance and little to improve in the presentation. This is the determining passage, which gives the clue to all his thought: — "To speak plainly my real sentiments, I must freely own that as long as there is any property and while money is the standard of all other things, I cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily; not justly, because the best things will fall to the share of the worst men; nor happily, because all things will be divided among a few (and even these are not in all respects happy), the rest being left to be utterly miserable."[1]

More knows well enough that in announcing such theories he will be considered either mad or a fool. He hedges his way as wisely as honesty will permit. He appeals to a double authority, Plato, the lord of ancient thought; and Christ, the Lord not only of thought but of life. Keenly and cleverly, he points out that an idea may appear absurd not from its intrinsic folly, but from the sin or ignorance of those who receive it. "If we must let alone everything as absurd or extravagant which by reason of the wicked lives of many seems

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 85.

uncouth, we must, even among Christians, give over pressing the greatest part of those things that Christ hath taught us, though He has commanded us not to conceal them, but to proclaim on the housetops that which He taught in secret. The greatest parts of His precepts are more opposite to the lives of the men of this age than any part of my discourse has been."[1] Finally, he disarms criticism and obtains a hearing by the artistic device of putting his radical sentiments upon the lips of Hythloday, and presenting himself as a shocked and conservative opponent. And even Hythloday urges these views for his final excuse in refusing to bear any part in the affairs of the world. So guarded, he goes on: "Whence I am persuaded that till property is taken away there can be no equitable or just distribution of things, nor can the world be happily governed; for as long as that is maintained, the greatest and the far best part of mankind will be still oppressed with a load of cares and anxieties. I confess without taking it quite away, those pressures that lie on a great part of mankind may be made lighter; but they can never be quite removed." . . . For suppose all sorts of limiting laws and provisions, civil service reform, graded income tax, etc. . . . "These laws, I say, might have such good effects as good diet and care might have on a sick man, whose recovery is desperate; they might allay and mitigate the disease, but it could never be quite healed, nor the body politic be brought again to a good habit, so long as property remains; and

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 83.

it will fall out as in a complication of diseases, that by applying a remedy to one sore, you will provoke another; and that which removes the one ill symptom produces others, while the strengthening one part of the body weakens the rest." [1]

A reply is fairly burning on More's conservative lips; no sooner has Hythloday's breath paused than it leaps out eagerly: — Property in common? How absurd — and with what delightful ease I shall instantly confute you! — "'On the contrary,'" answered I, "'it seems to me that men cannot live conveniently where all things are common: how can there be any plenty, where every man will excuse himself from labor? For as the hope of gain doth not excite him, so the confidence that he hath in other men's industry may make him slothful; if people come to be pinched with want, and yet cannot dispose of anything as their own, what can follow upon this but perpetual sedition and bloodshed, especially when the reverence and authority due to magistrates falls to the ground? For I cannot imagine how that can be kept up among those that are in all things equal to one another.'"

The ancient, the modern, the main argument against Socialism! You may hear it on the street-corner to-day, you may read it from the newspaper, in almost the very words of the conversation in the quaint Dutch town. Apart from possible truth, it has one great source of strength; it can never be met by argument. Facts alone could disprove it.

But what are we saying? For here is Hythlo-

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 86.

day, smiling, quiet, eager to speak. Listen: "If you had been in Utopia with me, and had seen their laws and rules as I did, for the space of five years" — Well thought of indeed, friend Raphael! Come, let us hoist the sails of thought and swiftly speed with you to that far, fair realm of your affections.

And so, with realistic detail which makes this first of English romances also one of the most charming, More leads us to the second, or constructive part of the book: the description of his ideal state. The very name disarms criticism: anything may exist Nowhere; and so having cleared the way — no easy task — of his reader's instinctive prejudices and conventions, he presents his scheme to be enjoyed at our ease.

IV

The "Utopia" was published in the same year with Macchiavelli's "Prince." The practical subtlety of the Italian renascence plays through the one, making it the most brilliant study ever written of the means by which the world taken as we find it may be used and subdued by a master-spirit. The large idealism of the English revival of letters animates the other. It is suggestive to note that although More's dream of the world as it might become is still unrealized, it makes stronger appeal to our generation than Macchiavelli's practical discussion of the world as it was.

For the most surprising thing in the "Utopia" is its modernness. Not only does More predict mod-

ern inventions in curious detail; the atmosphere of his world is indescribably like that of our own day. He is thinking of men of our own race and belief, and we follow his plans for the beautiful order of their lives with the keen interest that comes from a sense of possibility.

A sense of possibility is a strange phrase to associate with the "Utopia;" for the obvious remark that this communistic state violates human nature rises to every reader's lips as readily as to those of the interlocutor of Hythloday. Yet the sanity of the tone of the book is as striking as the audacity of its ideas; and it is curious to note how many of these ideas have been translated into fact by the centuries. More's conception of penology and his plea for religious toleration doubtless appeared to his contemporaries quite as preposterous as his industrial scheme; yet his construction of crime and its remedies is in harmony with our advanced modern policy, and the religious freedom which seemed a chimerical vision for generations after his death has been long enjoyed. If the industrial system on which his society is founded is still confined to Utopia, communication between that commonwealth and England is at least more frequent than in his day. One is inclined to suspect certain of our economists, even, of occasional trips into that land of vision; while as for the dreamers, — Ruskin, Bellamy, Morris, Howells, — they have sojourned there long enough to bring back full reports, which differ sometimes in detail from those of Hythloday.

To say that More's communistic ideal is open to wide criticism is to acknowledge that it is human. Every scheme of social reconstruction betrays the finite limitations of its inventor, and is monotonous in one way if not in another. One man's fancy will be bewitched by the possibilities of enlarged ease and comfort to be hoped for from mechanical inventions perfected and generally shared. He will write books full of ingenious descriptions of the free life which men might know if material resources were wisely developed. Every one will read the books with delight, many hail in them the prophecy of a near future, — till suddenly some wiseacre discovers that their thought is bourgeois, Philistine, materialistic. There you have "Looking Backward" and "Equality;" and we all feel that our present existence, whatever its futilities, is intellectually richer than the convenient life Bellamy has pictured. Another man is an artist. He does not mind inconvenience, but the ugliness of modern civilization haunts him like a nightmare; and with his mind stored with memories of all that has been most beautiful in the past, he dreams a fair dream for us of a lovely future, where architecture shall be redeemed from sordidness to dignity, and people from vulgarity to grace. His dream is a decorative frieze, without depth or movement; seek to penetrate below aspect to soul, and the beauty flees. We turn away bored from the monotonous charm of Morris' "News from Nowhere;" yet the artist could create only an artistic ideal, and it is fair to put the aspect not

the soul of his society beside the society of our own day. But indeed "the best in this kind are but shadows," and no imagination of the perfect state, with personal stress on a personal ideal, whether of comfort, beauty, or freedom, can equal the imperfect but marvelous ministry to human need and growth in our rough civilization as it is. To say this is simply to say that life is greater than art; it is not to deny that art can hold up an unattained ideal to life, a hint at a time. Our modern society is doubtless more interesting than that imagined by Bellamy, or Morris, or More; yet their several ideals may point, each in its own line, the way toward a new and nobler state.

In More, the emphasis falls on quite a different place from that in any modern Utopia; and both the strong and weak points in his scheme are exactly what would be expected. Morris imagines a society whose end should be beauty, Bellamy one whose end should be ease. The quest of More is for conditions which should set men free for the life of the mind.

The English renascence was preëminently inartistic. It produced no paintings, no sculpture. It fostered thought; and it developed the English ideal of freedom. Its stern spirit, already promising the austerity of the Puritan, may be clearly felt in the "Utopia." The book breathes an "atmosphere of asceticism," says William Morris, "which has a curiously blended savor of Cato the Censor and a mediæval monk." This asceticism affects chiefly details; but unluckily the details

caught public attention, and many people continue to think that all socialistic society would be hopelessly monotonous, because More dressed all his people, men, women, and children alike, in clothes of one pattern. It is quite true that outward beauty and variety are almost wholly indifferent to him. If the stigma of materialism rests on some modern socialistic dreams, no one could possibly attach it to the ideals of More. His one desire is to imagine means by which preoccupation with material things may be minimized and the best force of society be free to devote itself to the inner life.

The striking thing in all social Utopias, when grouped, is that, however their implied criticisms on the present differ as to symptoms, they show perfect agreement as to cause. One man is deeply convinced of the ugliness of civilization, another of its wasteful inconvenience, another of its stupidity, but all believe that false industrial conditions are the centre and source of social wrong; and all alike feel that the special reorganization they long for must be the result of industrial reform.

It is when More settles down to discuss such reform that he becomes most modern, most suggestive. He describes at first indeed, with pleasant charm, the location of his ideal city, and its appearance; he tells us briefly of the government, a representative democracy leading upward to a Prince for life; but it is in the section "Of their Trades and Manner of Life" that we begin really to know the surprising Utopians. We learn, to

begin with, that they all understand agriculture, having been trained in it in youth. More has a quiet, primal, unsentimental love of the country, and assurance that it should be, during early life at least, the common heritage. His feeling is like that of Vaughan: —

> "Fresh fields and woods! the Earth's fair face!
> God's footstool! and man's dwelling-place!
> I ask not why the first believer
> Did love to be a country liver?
> . . . . . .
> If Eden be on Earth at all,
> 'T is that which we the country call."[1]

Beside agriculture, "Every man has some peculiar trade to which he applies himself,"[2] and at these trades each person works six hours a day.

Uniformity in distribution of labor is thus the basis of Utopian society. Here, it is obvious, the thought of More touches that of Langland, only fellowship in work is no longer voluntary but compulsory; the statesman has a clear-cut, definite, and detailed theory to put beside the spiritual intuition of the dreamer of Malvern Hills. From the universality of labor follows the shortness of the working-day. If More's thought suggests that of his quaint predecessor, it is still further in line with many social theories that were to follow, and not only with theories but with movements. The six-hour day is not yet a battle-cry in the ranks of labor; but the eight-hour day is being eagerly claimed wherever the ten-hour day has been won.

[1] Henry Vaughan, *Retirement*.
[2] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 67.

To estimate the audacity of More's speculation, we must realize that his plan antedated by several centuries labor-saving machinery, and contemplated an industrial condition where all needs were supplied by hand. He never watched the action of economic laws in modern civilization. He never caught the hum of these myriad machines which, reducing the old labor of days to hours, hold the vast array of workmen bending over them for as long a working-day as brute strength permits, while another army, only less vast, waits hungrily with no work at all, their greedy hands outstretched to snatch their comrades' "jobs" at the first opportunity. The irony of the modern situation was spared Sir Thomas More.

One questions how, with the primitive conditions known to him, More ventures so to limit his working-day. He gives us his answer with his accustomed serenity; it is sweeping enough in suggestion, but it can be put into a phrase. He expects to reach his aim by two methods, — the suppression of luxuries and the elimination of the leisure class: — "But the time appointed for labor is to be narrowly examined, otherwise you may imagine, that since there are only six hours appointed for work, they may fall under a scarcity of necessary provisions. But it is so far from being true, that this time is not sufficient for supplying them with plenty of all things, either necessary or convenient; that it is rather too much, and this you will easily apprehend if you consider how great a part of all other nations is quite idle.

First, women generally do little, who are the half of mankind; and if some few women are diligent, their husbands are idle; then consider the great company of idle priests, and of those that are called religious men; add to these all rich men, chiefly those that have estates in land, who are called noblemen and gentlemen, together with their families, made up of idle persons, that are kept more for show than for use; add to these all those strong and lusty beggars that go about pretending some disease in excuse for their begging; and upon the whole account you will find that the number of those by whose labors mankind is supplied is much less than you perhaps imagined. Then consider how few of those that work are employed in labors that are of real service; for we who measure all things by money give rise to many trades that are vain and superfluous, and serve only to support riot and luxury." [1]

This plea for simplicity is a curious thing to find at the outset of that sixteenth century which was to see a sumptuous England aglow with color, exulting in the pride of life. The fastidious scholar who pleaded for it well knew against what deep-seated instincts he was working. He betrays his consciousness of the force of the desires for wealth and rank, by the stringent rules which he lays down to repress them. The Utopians have to summon to their aid not only philosophy, but most ingenious devices, to help them quell their acquisitiveness; and there is a sad humor in More's

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 98.

confession that the ghost of rank still lingers, an honored presence among them, though the body has long been buried. Every one remembers the cleverness of the Utopians in attaining due contempt for precious metals by using them as material for vile utensils and the chains of slaves; nor does one forget the pretty scene where ambassadors from a foreign land appear resplendent with gold and jewels, only to excite the laughter of the child, whom the courteous mother quiets with the remark, "Peace, Son; I think these be some of the ambassadors' fools." We cannot fail to read in this vehement horror of soft living, and this sharp sarcasm, the bitter experience of one who knew the world and the lust thereof at short range.

If More turns away with an almost prescient dread from permitting any luxury to his Utopians, it is not because he thinks manual labor in itself an end in life, nor because he believes in self-mortification. He is untouched by a certain latter-day cant, about labor being in itself a glory and an honor. He thinks it a wholesome thing in moderate amounts, but it should never mean the whole of life to any human being. His Syphogrants, or ruling class, who are exempt from labor, do indeed voluntarily share it, not for pleasure, however, but for the sake of example. Life is neither to the end of self-indulgence nor of toil: life, as the friend of Colet and Erasmus conceives it, is for the cultivation of the activities of the soul.

His analysis of industrial conditions completed, More's method is to give a synthetic picture of

Utopian life. The society he shows us is the most de-materialized, if a word may be coined, that any dreamer ever conceived. The impression carried away from a journey in Utopia is that of an extreme, though refined, simplicity of life. This follows as a matter of course from the restrictions on luxury already mentioned; it is also with the Utopians a matter of taste. In costume, in social forms, and almost all the outward concerns where diversity and elaboration naturally prevail, they preserve a uniform plainness of living.

Would Utopia be a pleasant state to live in? Or would existence there be insufferably monotonous and dead? This question is a little hard to answer because it involves a great deal. More does assuredly lose much by shutting his people off from all the varied joy to be gained from the production, to say nothing of the employment, of beautiful utilities; and the absence of artistic glow leaves his atmosphere a little gray. So far as the decorative arts are concerned, the Utopians practice to the full the æsthetic reticence of the Japanese. Yet we must not make him more extreme than he is. Many kinds of beauty are only ignored, not excluded, by his scheme; some he distinctly introduces. He endues his town with natural advantages, he gives it noble and awe-inspiring temples; and the regularity of domestic architecture is at least partly atoned for by the wide, sweet gardens behind the houses. The effect of Amaurot, the chief city, would be not unlike that of the Paris of the Second Empire.

The question, however, of the charms of Utopian life involves more than a consideration of details. It is essentially the question always asked about socialistic schemes. To face it at all frankly, we must put ourselves at the point of view of the individual Utopian. There is no use in taking a bird's-eye view of society as a whole and announcing that the uniformity of conditions removes variety from life and makes it dull. Social architecture, literal or metaphorical, was not planned for men that live in the air. And men who walk the streets see not the whole, but what meets one pair of eyes. Would the average Utopian find life more or less stimulating than the average American?

If we are to strike an average, we must remember the dreary, expansive monotony of conditions that envelops to-day the wage-earning population, the appalling absence of variety in the homes they live in, the factories they work in, the pursuits they follow. The advantages of the vaunted picturesqueness and variety of a competitive civilization with distinctions of rank are assuredly confined to the minority; for the monotony of the lives of the working-people is broken by little change except the fact, or fear, of unemployment. The life of the privileged would have to be intensely full of interest to-day, if the general average were to be in favor of modern conditions. But as a matter of fact, it may be doubted whether the millionaire, however hard-hearted, gets much unalloyed pleasure from contemplating the other

extreme of the social scale; just as it is doubtful whether the denizen of the East Side is roused to any special exertion by his consciousness of the remote glories of Fifth Avenue. A man's character is formed by conditions within his range, not by a general intuition of society as a whole.

Social conditions in More's ideal land present, when analyzed, considerable variety. The Utopia is not indeed a country with widely separated social extremes; but it is not a state of social equality, — misleading phrase! It is a state of equal social opportunity: the only approach to equality that a sane reason can entertain. Men start alike in this state; they by no means end alike. More recognizes differences in rank: princes, graded rulers, priests, men of learning. The procession of these offices is determined not by inheritance, but by manifested gifts; all, except that of prince, are open to ambitious, competent, and virtuous citizens. The men who hold them are exempt from manual labor, and form, if they choose, a leisure class. In this theory of the equal start, the root-idea of the Utopia, More anticipates the Jacobinism of the eighteenth century and the teachings of Rousseau; in the application of it, he is ahead of all but the most advanced democracy of our own day. He lived at the beginning of an epoch to number its centuries; past their dim vistas, his prophetic eyes followed the track of the dawn.

Among his Utopians as a whole, More allows for much freedom of inclination and development.

Each child is to choose his trade, as with us, after the common training in country life has been received; and, we may add, with less distressful pressure of haste and fewer limitations in outlook. Work finished, the Utopians are supplied with as much variety of resource as a people so alert for abstractions could demand. More is sure that they will attend their lectures before breakfast, though he admits that exceptions to this enthusiasm may be found. Meanwhile they have music, games, travel, domestic life, as well as study. If the fear of material need takes with it, as it vanishes, one element of excitement, a plenty of other vicissitudes remain; and abundant opportunities for romance exist in the vigorous ease and freedom of the social conditions.

But it is when the friend of Erasmus treats of the philosophy and religion of the Utopians that he shows most eager enthusiasm, and brings us into most curious sympathy with that singular people. In the communal life, religion plays a mighty part, as ritual, as doctrine, and as conduct. Much in his thought and plans More derives from the still Catholic civilization of England; for a larger part he depends on his own thought, and, loyal son of the Church that he is, utters words so ringing with the note of religious freedom that they can never be forgotten. Utopus "left men wholly to their liberty, that they might be free to believe as they should see cause," with one restriction, that men who disbelieve the immortality of the soul shall be raised to no public office; yet

even these are pitied instead of punished, for "they lay this down as a maxim,"— and the Christian world has barely to-day learned to agree with them, — "that a man cannot make himself believe anything he pleases." Perfect religious freedom reigning, Utopia develops as many sects as America; with the difference that there is one state-religion, shrined in magnificent temples, where all, whatever their persuasions, meet to worship by impressive rite that Divine Essence whom all equally adore.

More has thought much on the priesthood. "Their priests," he tells us with delicate irony, "are men of eminent piety, and therefore they are but few." Women are occasionally made priests, More here, as everywhere, recognizing the equality of the sexes. He plans for two orders in the priesthood. One, celibate and æsthetic, renounces utterly the earth, hoping only for the joys of heaven; theirs is the Catholic ideal. The other, "less willing to put themselves to much toil, prefer a married state to a single one," and in the cheerful common-sense of their religion anticipate the standards of the Protestant clergy. "The Utopians," says More, "look upon these as the wiser sect, but they esteem the other as the most holy."[1]

Taking into account the varying resources with which More provides his people, it is impossible to avoid the impression that we have here a singularly noble picture of a social state wholesome, sweet, and sane. Life in Utopia, neither stifled

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 155.

by luxury nor starved by want, could find free expression. It is invigorated, not by conflict with artificial conditions, but by the ceaseless normal struggle of the body to subdue the earth to fertility, and of the spirit to conquer truth. A just criticism of More's thought will emphasize less the artistic omissions so easily supplied than a failure to record the ceaseless flux of social forms, a certain immobility in his ideal civilization, inevitable, perhaps, in the work of a thinker who lived too soon to realize evolution. But the picture drawn by Hythloday, whatever its defects, is more charged with intellectual and spiritual suggestions than that of any social dreamer in England before or since.

## V

Hythloday is a figment, Utopia a myth. Behind Raphael the traveler lurks More the Englishman, and Utopia is but England reversed. A constant satire on the actual state of things plays through the constructive imagery of the book. Often this satire is veiled, as in the brilliant and much-misunderstood section on War; but toward the end, it rises into direct, vigorous, sad denunciation. No more impressive arraignment of society exists than the last few pages of the "Utopia." Putting aside disguises, More here speaks out his whole great mind: —

"I would gladly hear any man compare the justice that is among them with that of all other nations: among whom may I perish if I see any-

thing that looks either like justice or equity: for what justice is there in this, that a nobleman, a goldsmith, a banker, or any other man that either does nothing at all, or at best is employed in things that are of no use to the public, should live in great luxury and splendor on what is so ill acquired; and a mean man, a carter, a smith, or a ploughman, that works harder even than the beasts themselves, and is employed in labors so necessary that no commonwealth could hold out a year without them, can only earn so poor a livelihood, and must lead so miserable a life, that the condition of the beasts is much better than theirs? For as the beasts do not work so constantly, so they feed almost as well, and with more pleasure: and have no anxiety about what is to come, whilst these men are depressed by a barren and fruitless employment, and tormented with the apprehensions of want in their old age; since that which they get by their daily labor does but maintain them at present, and is consumed as fast as it comes in, there is no overplus left to lay up for old age.

"Is not that government both unjust and ungrateful, that is so prodigal of its favors to those that are called gentlemen, or goldsmiths, or such others who are idle, or live either by flattery, or by contriving the arts of vain pleasure; and on the other hand takes no care of those of a meaner sort, such as ploughmen, colliers, and smiths, without whom it could not subsist? . . .

"Therefore I must say that, as I hope for mercy, can have no other notion of all the other govern-

ments that I see or know, but that they are a conspiracy of the rich, who on pretense of managing the public, only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and arts they can find out; first that they may without danger preserve all that they have so ill acquired, and then that they may engage the poor to toil and labor for them at as low rates as possible and oppress them as much as they please. And if they can but prevail to get these contrivances established by the show of public authority, which is considered as the representative of the whole people, then they are accounted laws." [1]

These trenchant sentences have the distinct ring of the modern social democracy. They vibrate with that indignant sympathy with the working-people which underlies the serene calm of the "Utopia."

More feels, as a modern writer might, the deadening and materializing influence of the pursuit for money, and the expansion of higher ambitions which might instantly follow, if that great anxiety were removed. Finally, he is deeply impressed with the conviction that pride, and pride alone, is at the root of social inequalities: "For this vice does not measure happiness so much by its own conveniences, as by the miseries of others; and would not be satisfied with being thought a goddess, if none were left that were miserable, over whom she might insult." In these grave words, we seem to hear the sentence pronounced upon that

[1] *Ideal Commonwealths*, p. 163.

haughty feudal civilization, with its graded honors and functions, which was just passing away; we hear, alas! no less a prophetic judgment upon that commercial society which, when More wrote, was rising from the old, and, like its predecessor, was to take centuries to run its course.

Yet satire and invective are not the chief strength of the "Utopia;" through its irony plays an irrepressible hope. It is in vain that More ends with a wistful sigh: "There are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish than hope to see practiced in our Government." We feel throughout that these are the dreams of a man full of the sense of power, confident alike in the intelligence and the ability of human nature, and deeply and solemnly impressed with that mutability in human affairs which, as it may induce a mood of depression and indolence, may also in different temperaments stimulate to high and buoyant courage. The masterful instinct of the Renascence plays through the book and invigorates it. More has indeed no expectation of immediate change, but he sees, as Plato saw before him, an entire nation living under conditions of wholesome freedom; and so vivid is the picture that it works conviction in his mind.

A new revelation must indeed have dawned on men between the work of Langland, so acquiescent with all its courage, and that of More, so revolutionary in spite of its statesman-like experience. To the singer of the Plowman, existing conditions are immutable facts: "As things have been,

they remain," and only from the self-abnegation of the Cross and its followers does a ray of light shine down the twilight of the world. Social regeneration Langland can earnestly demand, but social reconstruction lies out of the scope of his most daring speculation. In More, the age of patience has passed away, and the age of hope has arisen. Langland reveals to us the heart of the laborer; More sets before us his picture of the perfect state. Social radicals always tend to the attitude of one of these, our first two social prophets. Some delight in sweeping theories, and image for themselves, with wide-reaching intellectual ardor, a new earth where human intelligence shall at last achieve for all men a state of justice, freedom, and peace. Others, no less ardent, cannot escape the conviction that the world will always go on its old way. They see the Holy City as a perpetual Becoming, ever descending, as the Seer in Patmos beheld it, from heaven to men: never quite established here below. All the more fervently do they summon individuals to become here and now citizens of that Heavenly City, to renounce the world and the lust thereof, and to give themselves to the fellowship and service that abide. The two positions are both common among us to-day: nor is there much use in discussing their relative truth or value, so long as the ideals of both remain equally unrealized.

Meanwhile, we can hardly go wrong in ascribing the new freedom and the widened reach of thought in the "Utopia" to the infusion of Hel-

lenism brought by the New Learning; nor can we regret the enlargement, with its stimulating power. And yet, in placing exclusive emphasis on the formative influences of the classics over More's mind, we run danger of injustice both to his personality and to his thought. Other influences, of a type wholly different from those which could emanate from Hellas, were at work in the noble and holy character of the man who daily repeated in his private chapel the Litany and Suffrages, wore a hair-shirt next his skin, was drawn powerfully to the monastic vocation, and was to die a Catholic martyr and be sainted by the Catholic Church.

The social bearings of the teaching of Christ are discerned, or at least proclaimed, with more courage in the "Utopia" than in the "Vision of Piers the Plowman." More strikes the Christian note at the very beginning; he converts his Utopians to Christianity with amazing willingness through their swift perception of its communistic ideal; and the superb conclusion of the book shows how deeply he believed that in demanding a new social order he was fulfilling the will and following the authority of Christ's commands: "Who as He was infinitely wise knew what was best, and would have drawn all the world over to the laws of the Utopians if Pride, that plague of human nature, that source of so much misery, did not hinder it." To realize how much deeper his Christianity lay than mere specific allusions, we have but to compare the gracious commonwealth of Utopia with its harsh and military prototype in Plato's Repub-

lic. Plato's state is sternly military. His communistic regulations are confined to the upper class, while the lower orders, presupposed, are all but ignored; and communism is extended to the destruction of the family. In More, the spirit of love illumines that severe Justice which was the quest of the old philosopher, and the Greek and pagan dream becomes Christian and English.

The truth is that More lived at a fortunate moment. The individualism of the Renascence had not yet gone so far in its enthusiasm for earth as to forget heaven, and the clash of the secular against the religious ideal was as yet unheard. With equal reverence, More could seek for wisdom from the clear thought of antiquity or from the ardent aspirations of the Church; and words from Christ and from Plato might rest side by side on his pages, in tranquil harmony. Such harmony could not endure: a great conflict was impending. It came in matters religious first; and till the end of the seventeenth century, theological controversy diverted thought from the quieter dwelling on matters economic and social. But we may surely welcome this noble and melodious book, in which the free and unfettered play of thought on social questions betrays the sense of power and responsibility which was creating the Reformation, and prophesies a time when the Reformation should have done its perfect work, and men, free in their relations to God, could turn their whole ardor into seeking for freedom in their relations with one another.

## CHAPTER III

### THE AGE OF JONATHAN SWIFT

#### I

THE ideal of social reconstruction dominates the "Utopia;" and intellectual achievement and religious freedom proceed as natural, incidental consequence from the industrial conditions and democratic institutions which More suggests. But the line of advance was not to be that which he dreamed. Three centuries and a half were to pass before his social ideals were to be echoed. These centuries were among the greatest in English story; they achieved mighty gains for humanity; but the evolution of social passion and social theory was not their task. That task was the conquest of political and religious liberty for England.

For generations after More's day, one phase or another of religious controversy absorbed all powers of speculation and many powers of life. The first phase was the struggle between Romanism and the native Anglican Church. The fires at Smithfield, which More might have lived to see, died down, and with them sank forever the supremacy of the Roman Church in England. Meanwhile, the country of Elizabeth had enough to do without handling economic problems. The swift increase in mate-

rial prosperity threw such problems into the background at an early point in the reign. The jolly Prentices of poem and drama led a care-free life. They had a sturdy sense of English independence, but little discontent with their lot; they shared the joyousness of the times and that new national consciousness, fostered by foes without and the sense of power within, which was in itself an achievement great enough for one generation. Of social unrest the literature of this period bears little trace.

In its earlier moods, to be sure, the pastoral strain sounds loud and contented and sweet:[1] —

"Who can live in heart so glad
As the merry country lad?
Who upon a fair green baulk
May at pleasure sit and walk?
And amid the azure skies
See the morning sun arise?
While he hears in every spring
How the birds do chirp and sing;
Or before the hounds in cry
See the hares go stealing by;
. . . . . .
Then the bee to gather honey;
And the little black-haired coney
On a bank for sunny place
With her fore-feet wash her face;
Are not these worth thousands moe
Than the courts of kings do know?"

But the "merry country lad," if we follow his story in "Arcadia," or the "Faerie Queene," or the "Shepherd's Calendar," proves always to be knight or poet in disguise, and his Aglaia, Philoclea,

[1] Nicholas Breton, *The Passionate Pilgrim.*

Pastorella, is a lass of high degree, who keeps her flocks as pastime or prelude, before her dainty graces are restored to her native court.

Even the drama, popular in origin and appeal, shows few popular sympathies; one may search it almost in vain for democratic sentiments or social inspiration. The mob doth dearly love a king; and on the Elizabethan stage, high-born lords and ladies were the only people in whose fate a serious interest could be taken. The others only furnished the jokes, and Bottom, Quince, Gobbo, Dogberry, and the rest, very likely roared with laughter at the antics of their prototypes on the stage. It is true that the lightsome domestic drama of Heywood and Dekker gives us charming pictures of homely life, and suggests at times, as in Heywood's Master Shore of "King Edward the Fourth," the sense for the dignity of the middle class; but the "Foure Prentices of London," who make their jolly way to the wars and turn up at the capture of Jerusalem as crowned heroes, are the sons of a disguised earl in the good old fashion. Their adventures and the gay intrigue of Dekker's "Shoemaker's Holiday," and of that curious, rollicking forerunner of the spirit of Burns and Gay, Richard Broome's "Merry Beggars," are in the pure style of light opera, and valuable only as witnessing to the growth of conventional class-types. A note of sweet compassion for the poor is struck now and again in the old drama.

> "It takes away the holy use of charity
> To examine wants," —

says Alinda, in Fletcher's "Pilgrim:" but charity itself is conventional. The social problems, found by the modern stage so fertile in dramatic motifs, the Elizabethans recked not of.

One can hardly exaggerate the aristocratic character of Elizabethan literature. It is aristocratic in a noble sense; it proceeds from the noble court of Elizabeth, and "courtliness" is the word that expresses it best. The keynote is struck at the very outset, in that quaint, high-minded book, Lyly's "Euphues:" "Gentlemen," says a reverend personage, accosting two young gallants, Euphues and Philautus, "Gentlemen — for such I perceive ye to be by your carriage, and ye can be no more, being but men." From this time to the time of Hooker and Bacon, in all literature, even to the little lyric cries that lilt with sudden sweetness through grave deliberations and patriotic fervors, the quest is the same: the fashioning a new type of heroism, learned and peaceful, which replaces the primitive and unlettered type of the mediæval knight. We see the hero in relation to his queen, to his country, to his church, to his love: in all these relations, we learn what an ideal gentleman should be.

In persons, the age produced Sir Philip Sidney; in poetry, Spenser's "Faerie Queene." The one lived what the other sung, — the ideal of perfect knighthood, made gentler, wider, because translated into terms of contemporary life. Spenser's poetry is the very mirror of the times at their best. Its bright and chivalric spirit scorns money as much

as it cherishes what money brings. Listen to Sir Guyon, knight of Temperance, tempted in the cave of Mammon by piles of glistening lucre: —

> "Me ill besits that in der-doing armes
> And honours' suit my vowèd daies do spend,
> Unto thy bounteous baytes and pleasing charmes,
> With which weake men thou witchest, to attend;
> Regard of worldly mucke doth fowly blend,
> And low abase the high heroicke spright,
> That joyes for crownes and kingdomes to contend;
> Faire shields, gay steedes, bright armes be my delight;
> These be the riches fit for an advent'rous knight."[1]

Guyon has little to answer to Mammon's obvious retort that these attractive matters are hardly to be had without his help; yet Spenser evidently thinks that the knight has the best of the argument. The "raskell many" intrude as seldom on the consciousness of the poet as on the ways of his wandering knights; but a shade of haughtiness darkens his courtesy whenever social distinctions occur to him.

> "In brave poursuitt of honorable deed,
> There is I know not what great difference
> Betweene the vulgar and the noble seed,"[2] —

he cries. In the fifth book, Sir Artegall, champion of Justice, meets a giant of Communism who wishes to weigh the sea and land in his balances, and distribute them more evenly.

> "Therefore I will throw downe these mountaines hie,
> And make them levell with the lowly plaine;
> These towring rocks, which reach unto the skie,
> I will thrust downe into the deepest maine,
> And, as they were, them equalize againe.

[1] *Faerie Queene*, book ii. canto vii. st. x.
[2] *Ibid.*, book ii. canto iv. st. i.

Tyrants, that make men subject to their law,
I will suppresse, that they no more may raine;
And Lordings curbe that commons over-aw,
And all the wealth of rich men to the poore will draw." [1]

The crowd listen to him with rapture: —

"Like foolish flies about an hony-crocke;
In hope by him great benefite to gaine,
And uncontrollèd freedome to obtaine." [2]

The giant is not a dangerous foe; the ridicule which Spenser casts at him shows that the Elizabethan poet felt it quite needless to put a serious construction on his antics. Sir Artegall has no trouble at all in answering his arguments; and as with much satisfaction to himself the knight demonstrates that equality produced to-day would be inequality to-morrow, he utters a line which shows the attitude of Spenser and of his age to all radical social changes. "All chance is perilous and all change unsound," [3] says Sir Artegall.

No one can read the "Faerie Queene," no one can know the Elizabethans, and regret the pride of rank in that great period. It had a work to do: to exalt the ideal of character higher than ever before; to raise such a standard of magnificent manhood that the English-speaking race could never be content with a vulgar average life. We in America have unconsciously higher intuitions because Sidney lived and Spenser flashed his vision of Arthur the Magnificent, of St. George,

[1] *Faerie Queene*, book v. canto ii. st. xxxviii.
[2] *Ibid.*, st. xxxiii.
[3] *Ibid.*, st. xxxvi.

and of Sir Artegall, upon the world. The work was done, and the ideal of courtliness is one which social evolution, though it develop in forms of the most advanced democracy, can never afford to lose.

II

The seventeenth century had a wholly different task. It witnessed the rise of the middle class, and it conquered political freedom. These great phenomena were both involved in the religious struggle and subordinate to it. That struggle had changed its aspect, but deepened if anything its intensity; it was no longer between Romanist and Protestant, it opposed Puritanism to the widely differing ideal of the Anglican Church. For the central years of the epoch, Puritanism reigned, and reigned as a leveling power. It brought in its train a scorn of earthly kings, a contempt for vain human distinctions; and it brought the grim determination to conquer freedom and to govern England through the will of godly citizens, not through the whims of the man Charles Stuart. An immense force of democracy was latent in Puritanism. The citizen supplanted the courtier as the courtier had supplanted the knight. For once, an antithesis of Macaulay's is true: "He humbled himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his King."

But in spite of its grim republican passion, the contribution of Puritanism to social literature is curiously slight. No Langland and no More spoke in the seventeenth century. The passion of the

time expressed itself rather in deeds than in books: Dainty songs for cavaliers and Anglican divines; sermons, prayers, and swords for the protectors of the Commonweal. The passion for secular freedom was purely to the end of the attainment of religious freedom; and hatred of the tyranny of kings, rather than compassion for the sufferings of the poor, was the mood of the time. The social equality which Puritanism for the first time fostered was not in any sense a deliberate aim, but an unconscious result of the temper which realized the nakedness of all souls before God.

The double achievement of the age is clearly mirrored in the work of two great Puritans, Milton and Bunyan. "The sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a Republican," wrote Shelley, and this is memorable and true. Yet in Milton, the glorious plea for religious and political freedom is of a haughty antique strain compatible with entire disregard of the welfare of the masses. In Bunyan's beautiful book, we have a social document of the highest value, witnessing to the habits and modes of life of the new burgher-class with a vivid simplicity unsurpassed. Christian's house and the Town of Destruction, Vanity Fair with its chaffer and gossip, the talk of the pilgrims by the way, are the best pictures we possess of middle-class life in seventeenth century England. The very change of centre since our last great allegory, the "Faerie Queene," speaks worlds in itself: the ideal of virtue, which once found symbol in twelve courtly knights, is now gathered into one

plain burgher; warfare has given place to pilgrimage, and for enchanted forests, hermitages, castles, and distressed damsels, we have now a plain journey across a dusty road, with stiles and wickets, modest citizen-towns, and here and there a comfortable farm or manor house, as setting to adventures, and only a rare lion or giant to recall the good old days of chivalry. The rise of the middle class seems to bring with it a new emphasis on the home; domestic life finds more beautiful expression in Bunyan than anywhere in the literature of feudalism or the Renascence, while as Christiana's family increases in the second part, the group of pilgrims furnishes a picture of Christian community life, the lovely simplicity of which is hardly equaled except in the records of the early Church. But nothing was farther from Bunyan's thought than social delineation. What was society to a man who gazed shuddering upon the soul? Salvation was his quest; the procedures of Vanity Fair were of no interest except so far as they might tempt the pilgrims to deny their Lord.

The obsession by religious matters which marked the seventeenth century could not be more plainly seen than in Bunyan. Put Milton by the side of Bunyan, and we have suggested the whole work of the age in the inner world of mind. It was a mighty achievement. It changed the centre of interest from noble to common man; and it uplifted the ideal of freedom into a glorious yet visible light above the heads of men, ever after ready to greet an upturned gaze. All this it did and

did it wholly under the Christian impetus. If it went no further, if little actual distress over the actual conditions of men disturbed it, we recognize as reasons the very purity of its idealism, on the one hand, which viewed outward conditions as matters of complete indifference; on the other, the law by which one age can speak one stanza only in the unending poem of the world.

The work of the seventeenth century seemed to be thrown away. The Restoration followed the Commonwealth; Wycherley and Congreve were contemporaries of Bunyan. The centre of literature veered back to the court; alas, no longer to the court of Elizabeth! Folly, frivolity, intrigue, vulgarity masked as delicatesse, wit playing in vacuity like heat-lightning in the dark, make up the Restoration drama. The lack of resources in a society that could compound such plots seems to the modern reader almost more tragic than its wickedness. In the eighteenth century, a reaction, to a certain extent, set in; it moved away from the ignoble, but not toward the ideal; it moved toward the respectable. We have reached the age of Pope and Addison and Steele, of Arbuthnot and Clarke and Atterbury; we have reached the age of Dean Swift.

III

Approaching the eighteenth century from the centuries that lie behind it, a modern man feels for a time singularly at home in its literature. As he roams through its pleasant and neatly ordered

ways, he meets people much like himself, neither heroic beings like the men of the sixteenth century, nor grave, if slightly grotesque, Puritans, but cultivated, easy, well-bred men and women, with interests often very similar to our own. In turning over the pages of old "Spectators" and "Tatlers," one encounters no passion, such as sears mind and heart in the mournful glory of the Jacobean drama; people are almost as suitably reserved as to-day. Just as with us, social and literary criticism, discussions of social morality, and eager observation of manners pass lightly from lip to lip.

Yet below all this outward likeness, the reader soon becomes aware of an inalienable difference, separating that literature from our own; and in time this sense so grows on him that he comes to feel the eighteenth century, with its easy, superficial modernness, more remote from ourselves in essential spirit, in real attitude, than the Middle Ages or the Renascence. Carlyle could clasp hands more readily with Langland than with Addison; Matthew Arnold would be quite at ease on meeting More in fields Elysian, but even his elasticity would be taxed to find common ground, at least in regard to matters which may be supposed to retain interest in those regions, with the eighteenth century wit or the eighteenth century divine. The modes of thought which underlie the modes of manners in the age of Queen Anne and of the Georges are farther from the modern democracy than any logic-line can reach.

To explain this distance were to analyze the age;

but assuredly one cause for it is found in the narrow social scope of eighteenth century literature. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the common people were, to be sure, disregarded by literature; but a large and free conception of humanity as a whole was, after all, the atmosphere in which Art moved and wrought. In the next century, eyes were fastened on the Town. Court, drawing-room, coffee-house, became the three centres of existence. The wide, humorous background of vulgar every-day life, readily if lightly sketched by the old drama, the offhand studies in class-types of the plain people, are suspended: literature, for a brief time, belongs wholly to the sophisticated, and shows a blank oblivion of the majority of the race. Within this narrow area it develops a conscious interest in social criticism, a keen delight in observation of manners; almost it may be said to create a new art-form, social satire. This satire is at close range; when it generalizes, it is lost. It cannot roam through the earth, watching, like Langland's grave spirit, "all manner of men, the mean and the rich, working and wandering as the world asketh." It is at home in noting the foibles, studying the etiquette, ferreting out the animosities and intrigues, of a coterie of individuals.

The last century succeeded in a difficult task. It untwined from all social connection two great interests, always before interwoven with the larger human life. The two were religion and politics. It is wholly possible to explore the intricate maze of eighteenth century statecraft, or to master the

many ponderous tomes of Anglican divinity, and find never a hint at the problems and phenomena which we to-day call social. Politics occupies itself with wars and intrigues abroad, with intrigues and personal animosities at home. It is a game, where the cleverest trickster beats, and personal ambition is supplemented by nothing nobler than party-spirit. The large output of pamphlets in the eighteenth century contains work immensely superior to that of the prolific period of the Commonwealth in cleverness, terseness, effectiveness; but from the time of Algernon Sidney to that of Burke, it holds not a breath of that larger inspiration and passion which can make a local controversy of the moment a treasure for all time.

It is not unprecedented to find politics absorbed in cabals and conflicts and oblivious to the interests of the people. But what is surely almost unprecedented in Christendom is the attitude of the Anglican Church towards social matters. Whatever the faults of the Church, its ideal had always been clear. In the ages of feudalism it offered the only corrective to rank and the only ideal of democracy; Langland, with all his severe strictures on the priesthood, never sought to turn elsewhere for social salvation and incentive than to the gospel of Christ with its message of sacrifice and poverty. More, at the opening of the secular age, yet summoned Christianity for witness, as a matter of course, to the reasonableness of abolishing private property. Through the long rise and rule of Puritanism, Christianity, however misconceived, was

assuredly free from worldliness; and our own Pilgrim Fathers may suggest how great an impetus toward poverty and stern simplicity of living was held in that severe faith. In the eighteenth century, the long religious wars were seemingly over; the Anglican Church had conquered Romanism; Puritanism had sunk out of sight deep into the hearts of the ignored people, whence it was to arise a mighty and refreshing stream, in the Wesleyan movement. The Church had won the day and held the field. And the first thing it did was to repudiate its old relationships. It sought no wedlock with poverty, such as Francis sought and Giotto painted in his great fresco. That patient Griselda was degraded to household service: a new bride took her place, Prosperity, decorously arrayed and prudent of mien.

It is extremely difficult to understand the religion of the eighteenth century, or would be, if so much of the same type did not linger among us. To a casual reader of the gospel it seems axiomatic that the followers of Christ must, *ipso facto*, be the champions of liberty and of the poor; yet here we find His followers, orthodox and sincere, deliberately ranking themselves as champions of established rights and of the well-to-do. The Church had become a vast machine, for the patronage of morality and the promotion of her own officers; those officers speak repeatedly with a candor unmistakable and refreshing, compared to the evasions not unknown to-day. How admirable an investment is religion! Such is the burden of their pleading.

Sure gage of respectability here and comfort hereafter! To turn over the pages of their sermons is to feel the Sermon on the Mount receding into infinite space. Here is one of these excellent discourses headed "Of the Wisdom of Being Religious." We read and are almost won to so courteous and comforting a gospel; though perhaps some troubling recollection drifts through our minds of a faith calling to sacrifice and ending in a Cross. Not this faith surely, for — "The Principal Point of Wisdom in the Conduct of Human Life is so to use the Enjoyments of this present World as that they may not themselves shorten that Period wherein 'tis allowed us to enjoy them. . . . Temperance and Sobriety, the regular governing of our Appetites and Passions, the promoting Peace and Good Order in the World are, even without Regard to any Arguments of Religion, the greatest Instances of human Wisdom; because they are the most effectual Means of preserving our Being and Well-being in the World; of prolonging the Period and enlarging the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. Religion has added Strength to these Considerations; and by annexing the Promise of God's immediate Blessing to the natural Tendency and Consequences of things, has made the Wisdom of choosing Virtue infinitely more conspicuous and the Folly of Vice more apparently absurd."[1]

It would be wrong to disparage the kindly common sense and entire sincerity of eighteenth century religion; but one may be excused for finding in it

[1] Clarke, *Sermons*, vol. ii. Sermon XVII.

few reminiscences of the Gospels. The perplexity of the honest eighteenth century divine, wrestling with the Sermon on the Mount, is entertaining and instructive. "We are not obliged," says the worthy, "to seek the Kingdom of God *wholly* or *only* in a total and absolute Exclusion of all other desires (as some melancholy well-disposed persons may be apt to imagine), but only that we are to seek it chiefly and in the first place." And finally the whole matter of our social duty is comfortably summed up. We are required "only to retrench our vain and foolish expenses; not to sell all and give to the poor, but to be charitable out of the superfluity of our plenty; not to lay down our lives or even the comfortable enjoyments of life, but to forsake the unreasonable and unfruitful pleasures of sin."[1] Such, amid discourses on the Installation of the Lord Mayor and the Anniversary of the Death of Charles the Martyr, are the reassuring remarks of eighteenth century divinity.

One would suppose that this century must have been an easy and comfortable age to live in, but its sons of greatest genius did not seem to find it such. To gather in a group the fates of the chief men of letters of this age is startling and painful. Addison died mildly as he had lived; but Pope, tormented with hysteria and neurotic woes; Collins in an asylum; Gray, subjugated by dumb melancholia; Johnson, overwhelmed periodically by the same black cloud; Cowper, in his long agony; — do not exhaust the list of men of genius who, in a

[1] Clarke, vol. i. p. 212.

period that aimed primarily at sanity and repressed all idealism and enthusiasm to the end of that achievement, succumbed to some form of mental disease. Of all these, no fate is so sorrowful as that of the greatest, saddest son of the age, most tragic personality in the long tale of English letters, — Dean Swift.

IV

We know many private reasons for the fierce melancholy that breathes from the great figure of Swift. His hard youth of dependence led to a disappointing career; four years of power and prosperity deepened by contrast the dreariness of a long quarter-century spent, obscure and neglected, as a practical exile in Ireland. A dark mystery shrouded the life of his affections: passionately loved by women, even unto death, he never married, but maintained a harsh remoteness from feminine ties, broken by poignant visitations of tenderness. Whether his strange attitude sprang from the sense of an impending curse and the unwillingness to perpetuate it, whether there were other secret tragic cause, we do not know, but Swift lived a lonely and disappointed man, and died, after years of encroaching misery had deepened his dreadful expectation, in the horror of great darkness, in madness of a frightful type.

It is a sorrowful history. Yet the essential sadness of Swift's life lay deeper than personal experience. It was interwoven with the conditions of his age. He knew his times intimately and long:

the little world of the great, the great world of the humble, the statesman's palace, and the peasant's hut. He was a profoundly sensitive man, yet he was also matter-of-fact. His honest recognition of things as they were was mitigated by no intervening haze of romance, and no spiritual revelation of distant hopes. He was no mystic, like Langland, visited by visions of consolation; no philosopher, like More, able to escape the sordid present by weaving speculative schemes. He took life as he found it, with savage sincerity: he saw it steadily and saw it whole, if ever a realist can attain such vision; and he saw it as unrelieved tragedy. In London, among the rich and the eminent, he found greed, ambition, triviality ruling; in Ireland, he witnessed the agonizing and brutalizing suffering of the poor. His was not a temperament to manufacture ideals; and the times had no ideals to offer. What wonder if fierce wrath filled his great, sad soul; if the worlds of politics, of society, of the great mass of men, seemed to him equally contemptible and pitiful; if the only man in the eighteenth century born with something of the temperament of the prophet should have faced life with the prophet's sorrow, but nothing of the prophet's vision! The social sarcasm of Swift is unequaled in fervor of ironic power, but is also alone among the chief satires of England in the bitterness of its tone. The terrible epitaph which, by his own command, was placed over his tomb speaks of the only peace possible to him. He lies "ubi sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit."

Swift's satire plays in the regions he knew best: society, politics, and the life of the common people of Ireland. In the first two regions, many other writers are as much at home as he. We can still divert ourselves with the graceful archness of the studies of fashionable life in old "Spectators" and "Tatlers," we can still smile with unfailing relish at the neat satirical turns and playful mockery in which the period delighted. Social criticism is the most distinctive feature of Augustan literature, and the critics, as a rule, find their own age extremely pleasant. They exalt themselves as social censors; but the greatest evils they attack are the coquetry of the Belle, the ill-nature of the Wit, and the naughtiness of scandal: at worst, their most severe reproaches are directed at the practice of spending the entire day at the card-table. If this was an age of despair, neither writers nor people knew it. But if an age of despair is one that has ceased to hope, to what age could the term be applied more truly? From first to last, in its brilliant and extended social delineation and criticism, there is not one visiting air from a wider heaven, not one suggestion of social purpose or social discontent. The very prevalence of the satirical tone speaks volumes in itself: for satire waxes only as idealism wanes. There was no satire in the rendering of Elizabeth's court by the high-souled gentlemen who sung its praises; and the lightly cynical tone of Augustan literature, sometimes conscious, sometimes instinctive, witnesses, as no elegies could witness, to a loss and a

lack. Satire untouched by wrath or sorrow, satire acquiescent and flippant and amused at itself, satire unburdened by the sense of outrage and of pain, is the most tragic thing in the world.

But the tragedy in Swift's satire is of another type. It is conscious and deliberate. The world which he shows us is precisely the same, in manners and morals, that we see in "The Rape of the Lock," "The Spectator," and, later, in the novels of Richardson; but the picture no longer affords the showman pleasure. Apart from personal animosities, the irony of Addison, Pope, Steele, and the novelists is almost uniformly cheerful. There is little contact between their spirit and the spirit of deep disinterested distress in the biting work of the great Dean.

Dean Swift's observations on society are scattered through all his writings; but the very quintessence of them is found in an extraordinary little skit, called "Polite Conversation." Like much of Swift's work, this farrago of nonsense has great literary merit. Its lightness, sparkle, and gayety flash out a cold, snapping light that stings with contempt and hatred. The satire is absolutely grave; pensive, urbane, reasonable — ruthless. A Preface, as clever a bit of writing as the century can show, gives us Swift's intention. There is little reason to doubt the seriousness of his method: he deliberately and solemnly set himself to take notes of the talk and gossip he heard, with a view to holding the society of his day up to ridicule, and then arranged and presented it in this absurd

drama without a plot, in which it is hard to know which to admire more candidly, the ineptitude of the details or the flat vacuity of the whole. He tells us just the society he has in view: "Although this work be calculated for all persons of quality and fortune of both sexes, yet the reader may perceive that my particular view was to the officers of the army, the gentlemen of the inns of court, and of both universities; to all courtiers, male and female, but principally to the maids of honor of whom I have been personally acquainted with two and twenty sets, all excelling in this noble endowment. . . . It may be objected that the publication of my book may, in a long course of time, prostitute this noble art to mean and vulgar people; but I answer that it is not so easy an acquirement as a few ignorant pretenders may imagine. A footman may swear, but he cannot swear like a lord. He can swear as often, but can he swear with equal delicacy, propriety, and judgment? No, certainly, unless he be a lad of superior parts, of good memory, a diligent observer, one who has a skillful ear, some knowledge in music, and an exact taste. . . . I am, therefore, not under the least apprehension that this art will ever be in danger of falling into common hands, which requires so much time, study, practice, and genius, before it arrives at perfection."

With this solemn introduction, Swift leads us into the company, — Lord Sparkish, Lady Smart, Mr. Neverout, Miss Notable, and the rest. It is a society which probably represents, with fair

accuracy, the tone of life among the fashionables of the day. It talks, in truth, an infinite deal of nothing.

*Col.* Miss, I heard that you were out of order; pray, how are you now?

*Miss.* Pretty well, Colonel, I thank you.

*Col.* Pretty and well, Miss! That's two very good things.

*Miss.* I mean that I am better than I was.

*Never.* Why, then, 't is well you were sick.

*Miss.* What! Mr. Neverout, you take me up before I'm done.

*Lady Smart.* Come, let 's leave off children's play, and go to push-pin.

*Miss.* Pray, Madam, give me some more sugar in my tea.

Swift gravely follows this delightful company through an entire typical day. The gentlemen meet in the morning on the mall; go to breakfast at Lady Smart's; linger till noon over their tea, of which the whole society consume an appalling amount; go home for an hour; return at three to dinner. We are treated to "the whole conversation at dinner:" —

*Miss.* Pray, Colonel, send me some fritters.

[*Colonel takes them out with his hand.*

*Col.* Here, Miss; they say fingers were made before forks, and hands before knives.

*Lady S.* Methinks this pudding is too much boiled.

*Lady A.* Oh! Madam, they say a pudding is poison when it is too much boiled.

*Neverout.* Miss, shall I help you to a pigeon? Here 's a pigeon so finely roasted it cries, 'Come, eat me.'

*Spark.* Why, a man may eat this though his wife lay a-dying. Etc., etc.

Oysters, veal, beef, fish, pudding, venison pasty, tongue, pigeon, vegetables, fritters, soup, chicken, black-pudding, almond-pudding, ham, jellies, goose, rabbits, sweets, cheeses, — no wonder that one of the ladies sighs mournfully: "Well, this eating and drinking takes away a body's stomach." Dinner ended, they separate, the gentlemen to hard drinking, the ladies to scandal and tea; presently the gentlemen reënter, and, after a few more cups of tea have been imbibed, the company falls to cards and silence: "A party at quadrille until three in the morning; but," Swift adds sardonically, "no conversation recorded." After this intellectual treat, they all "take leave," and very sleepily "go home."

This nonsense is entertaining enough; but Swift does not write it because he is amused; he writes it because he is disgusted. Never was frivolity recorded with such painstaking scorn. The trivial dialogue is redolent of pure vacuity; wit, having nothing but personality to exercise itself upon, becomes simple pertness; in the whole course of the fashionable day sketched for us, not one idea is broached, and not one real interest is suggested. As we watch and listen, through the sardonic person of the Dean, whom that society petted and feared, we remember that the years are passing, and that a revolution draws near.

From society to politics: and politics were the most absorbing interest of the time. Men of letters were drawing near to public life in the age of Queen Anne; and Swift's career, like that of some other contemporary writers, shows us the author and pamphleteer actually exercising influence on the course of national events, as he has continued to do in our own day. The Dean plunged into politics with all the seriousness of his nature. During the four years of his influence, he labored as earnestly for the Tories to whom he transferred his allegiance, as if he had passionately believed that the welfare of the nation depended on their holding the balance of power. Perhaps he did: the interests involved do not appear small, even in perspective. But if Swift the man of affairs treated politics with a respect not accorded to society, the same cannot be said of Swift the thinker. For withdrawn into the solitude of Irish life, and looking back upon London, he wrote those famous passages about the politics of Lilliput which scintillate in memory. As we read the grave accounts of the pygmy statesmen performing on the tight-rope, or anxiously turning somersaults to please their monarch, we seem to listen to a mocking translation of parts of the "Journal to Stella," while the controversy that shook the state, between the Big-Endians who broke their eggs at the large end, and the Little-Endians who preferred the small, was not invented by a man who put a very serious construction on party differences in his own England. It is permissible to wonder

whether Swift would have penned just these satires had he been a contemporary either of Raleigh or of Gladstone. There are causes great enough to control the natural animus of the scoffer; Bacon in the seventeenth century, Disraeli in the nineteenth, handled public matters without a sneer. Swift's writings bear another stamp. They proceed from a period when politics ignored more completely than ever before or since the larger causes which affect the general social welfare, and acknowledge with what seems to-day almost cynical openness the triviality of its interests, the meanness of its methods, and the selfishness of its aims.

Were Swift a modern, we should be amazed at the comparative absence from his virile irony of what we to-day call the distinctively social interest. The social contrasts which are the stock-in-trade of the modern satirist he never drew. They lay ready to his hand. It would have seemed natural to put against the pictures in "Polite Conversation" pictures of that wretched poverty he knew so well, as Carlyle in the next century artfully opposed his study of the Dandiacal Household to that of the Poor Slaves in "Sartor Resartus." Such a juxtaposition Swift never makes in any one book; the dramatic connection between luxury and misery he ignores, though he gives us the means of forming it; and it is characteristic of his age that he should do so.

Industrial conditions and the sufferings of the poor find, indeed, slight recognition in his pages. His political tracts, from articles in the "Exam-

iner" to the "Drapier's Letters," fill many volumes; his social writings would not occupy one tenth the space. But these writings make up in power what they lack in bulk. There is probably no social pamphlet in existence which leaves the reader so breathless with horror, so impelled to flee from civilization like Christian from the City of Destruction, as Swift's "Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of the Poor in Ireland from Being Burdensome, and for Making them Beneficial."

Like all Swift's distinctly social work, this pamphlet was inspired by Ireland. The great Dean was one of the earliest Irish patriots. He awakened for perhaps the first time a public or national consciousness in that unhappy country; his "Drapier's Letters," his personal service, his large and ceaseless charity his devoted ministry to the poor, rank him as a great philanthropist; he was the idolized leader of the nation for many years. But all this work only deepened the tragic melancholy with which he watched the increasing wretchedness of the land. It would probably be impossible to exaggerate the terrible suffering throughout Ireland in Swift's day, — suffering as great as that seen by Spenser in the sixteenth century. It is with an economic perspicacity not always found that Swift cries, "We are apt to charge the Irish with laziness, because we seldom find them employed; but then we do not consider they have nothing to do."

Brooding on this state of things, the mighty

heart of the Dean of St. Patrick's took fire. It burned with an intense, steady, colorless, and quiet flame. The heat of it scorches the reader of the "Modest Proposal" still. The "Proposal" is presented with an air of calmest reason. There are too many children in Ireland; there is not enough food: "I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms or on the backs or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom a very great additional grievance, and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public as to have his statue set up as a preserver of the nation. . . .

"There remain 120,000 children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, how this number shall be reared and provided for? which as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. For we can neither employ them in handicraft nor agriculture; we neither build houses (I mean in the country), nor cultivate land; they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old, except where they are of towardly parts; although I confess that they learn the rudiments much earlier. . . .

"I have been assured by a very knowing Americ[illegible]n of my acquaintance in London, that a young

healthy child, well nursed, is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

"I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration that of the 120,000 children already computed, 20,000 may be reserved. . . . That the remaining 100,000 may at a year old be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table. . . .

"I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children. . . .

"Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people who are aged, diseased, or maimed. . . . But I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known that they are every day dying and rotting by cold and famine and filth and vermin as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young laborers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition; they cannot get work, and consequently pine away for want of nourishment, to a degree that if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labor, they have not strength to perform it; and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evil to come. . . .

"I can think of no one objection that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and it was indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. . . . After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion, as to reject any offer proposed by wise men which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. But . . . I desire those politicians who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold as to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe, and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor clothes to cover them from the weather, and the most inevitable prospect of entailing the like or greater miseries upon their breed forever."

Here is truly a "check" on population more effective than any proposed by Malthus. It was a heart-broken man who penned these terrible words. Whether Swift looked at society, at politics, or at the wider world of Irish life, his mind was visited by no ray of cheer or hope. He saw in society an utter absence of all ideal aims; in politics, a scramble of personal ambition and intrigue; in the life of the poor, a natural, inevita-

ble, and irremediable tragedy. The testimony of Swift, let us repeat, as to eighteenth century conditions does not materially differ from that of other Augustan writers. But while they took their period with admiration and complacency, Swift took it with despair. Alone among the authors of the time, this great soul might have been an idealist in happier days. Idealism, suppressed and unnourished, can turn to a bitter smart; and Swift, suffering profoundly from conditions which he accepted as inevitable and recognized as hideous, produced, instead of any "Utopia" in which contempt for the present might be relieved by buoyant hope for the future, sarcasm stern, dark, and fatal, upon the grievous things he saw.

Swift's entire attitude is summed up and rendered with the terseness and charm of a brilliant imagination in the one popular book he ever wrote, "Gulliver's Travels." This book is the only one perhaps in the world to delight both child and cynic. It entertains us in youth, it depresses us in age. Simple as the underlying device is, nothing could better reach Swift's end, show us more clearly the relativity of all greatness, or fill us with more stinging contempt for human pride. The Lilliputians bring home to us our pettiness, the inhabitants of Brobdingnag our grossness; and either gross or petty, humankind always seemed to the miserable Dean. As we watch Gulliver wading into mid-ocean, and tying the fleet of Blefuscu to ropes with which he drags it ashore, how heartily we laugh at the frowning terrors of armies

and the great pretensions of national war! As the giant, now turned pygmy, revolts in disgust from the most delicate phases of the court-life of Brobdingnag, our own dainty refinements lose hold on our regard. Of the moral greatness which is independent of big or little, Swift gives us few hints indeed. But he did write, in the "Voyage to Laputa," an allegory elaborated with his best care and cleverness, in which he jeered as unsparingly at the intellectual ambitions of men as he had jeered at their practical interests in Lilliput. It is highly entertaining to travel in Laputa; but settled existence there would be as disheartening as in Lilliput or in Brobdingnag.

Are there any traces of social idealism in "Gulliver's Travels"? People have tried to find such traces in Brobdingnag, and have even compared this part of the "Travels" to the "Utopia." The big giant-king is indeed amiably shocked at the picture of English civilization which little Gulliver gives him, and we are left to infer from the delicious humor of the passage that similar vices are unknown in his bucolic state. But image of a wise social organization and of positive intelligent order in the Brobdingnagian society there is none. Not here, but among the Houyhnhnms, does the much-traveled Gulliver find the home of his heart; here would he fain spend the rest of his days; here is that peace, that freedom, that candor, decency, and reason, for which he has ceased to hope among men; here, among the brutes! For the placid horses who in this queer dream have reversed our

state, and hold the degraded race of men in subjection, are but beasts after all. Beasts with the virtues of beasts, which consist chiefly in freedom from human vices; cleanly, dignified, gentle; with no feeling for beauty, no instincts of deep affection, and with rudimentary powers of thought. The bearing of Swift's impassioned exaltation of their stupid life can hardly be mistaken. Nor is there in the social satires of the world so fierce and fearful a study of humanity as his picture of the hideous creatures who serve the Houyhnhnms: the Yahoos (yah! ugh!), in whose filthy persons and vile habits are seen all the elements which Swift believed to be the component factors of human life. Greed, quarrelsomeness, animal passion, cringing fear, he finds disguised and adorned, on his return to England, as he found them unconcealed among the servants of the mild good brutes he reveres. His disgust for the hated race grows not weaker but stronger when he is forced on their society; and we leave Gulliver, the much-experienced Ulysses of the eighteenth century, tolerating only on compulsion his fellow-beings, and able to find temporary mitigation of his lot only when he can retire to his stable and associate with his horses.

The bitterest thing in all Swift's writing is the entire absence of any militant impulse to contend against the tragedy it describes. There is no hint that human effort might under any conceivable circumstances render human existence less dark. For the trouble, to Swift, lies not in conditions,

but deep imbedded in man's nature itself. Of spiritual consolation, even in the crude form of belief in an hereafter, he has none to offer; nay, the weird allegory of the Struldbrugs, the most terrible he ever invented, suggests his deliberate conviction that continued life, so innately sordid is humanity, could be only a torture and a curse. These hideous Immortals, tainted with all vices, endued with no joys, live on forever among their descendants, a perpetual witness from generation to generation that life is essential meanness and essential pain.

The man who invented the Struldbrugs, who wrote "Gulliver's Travels," was a dean of the Anglican Church. He was scrupulously honest, and entirely orthodox. He attended to every duty of his office. He defended Christianity against the attacks of deists and infidels, using his favorite method of satire, — strangest weapon ever employed in behalf of the religion of the Lord of love. He read the Liturgy day by day, and approved its literary style. In perfect sincerity, he thought himself a good Christian. And all the time his soul was unvisited by faith in God or man. He never knew that mingled impulse of worship and compassion, that intuition, so strangely sweet, of a divine somewhat playing through human meanness and sensuality, which Christianity can bring. Of power for salvation, either individual or social, inherent in the gospel of Christ, Dean Swift had no more conception than if he had been a contemporary of Cato.

Few stranger paradoxes are to be found in literary history than this of our greatest pessimist and cynic tranquilly pursuing the priestly functions of the religion of hope and love. But the paradox of Swift was the paradox of his age; Augustan literature had lost the social with the spiritual outlook. It dreamed no dream of progress, it lifted the banner of no ideal. It despised while it depicted humanity. It was content to analyze its own present, with scorn that turned to jest or sob, according to its mood. Perhaps no phase of civilization has ever been more deeply imbued with the conviction of its own finality. No trouble stirred it, nor was it, seemingly, visited by compunction, save when occasionally, of a sudden, some great soul like Swift fell into fatal despair.

In France, Voltaire and Rousseau were, during the next quarter-century, to live and cry aloud: the one was to awaken in men's hearts a new passion of brotherhood, the other was to awaken in their minds a new sense of superiority to the established fact. In England itself, Hobbes and Locke had already flung thought back upon its own authority, and bidden the human reason, irrespective of tradition, create what universe it would. Despite all appearance, the age of authority, the age of finality, the age of conventions, was doomed. The French Revolution drew near; and democracy came in its train.

# PART II

## THE ENGLAND OF OUR FATHERS

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## CHAPTER I

### OUTLINES

I

LESS than a century passed between the woeful helplessness of Swift and Shelley's exultant cry of welcome to freedom: —

> "Come, Thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
> Of man's deep spirit, as the morning star
> Beckons the sun from the Eoan wave,
> Wisdom." [1]

A great race experience lay behind this invocation. For a brief moment, men of affairs, philosophers, and poets had joined in one fervent song.

> "The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return," [2] —

so they had chanted, with triumphant assurance of victory. French wit and English thought, and the personal passion of a Genevese, had all contributed to the most abstract of theories, that of the equal rights of men. Suddenly this abstract idea had

[1] Shelley, *Ode to Liberty.*
[2] *Ibid.*, Chorus in *Hellas.*

struck itself into the actual. There it found itself reinforced by the demand of a positive need: by suffering, first pitiful, then vehement, finally, as events advanced, maddened by a new sense of power. The revolutionary spirit, which was the outcome of this union of an ideal with a craving, succeeded for the time only in overturning the things that were; but in its failure it generated a hope that cannot die. From that day to our own, all life has been lived and all literature produced in the presence of that hope. "Une immense espérance a traversée la terre," — whatever the unrest or discouragement of modern literature, this its reader can never forget.

The French Revolution introduced a disturbing force into the sphere of politics, and made dynamic a new ideal in the sphere of thought. Meanwhile another revolution was in progress; it proceeded more quietly, but brought with it yet more important readjustments of the whole social system. This was the industrial revolution which at the end of the last century followed the introduction of machinery. It was not initiated by a dramatic display, and its effects were slow in gaining recognition: for they worked below the surface, reaching chiefly the inarticulate classes. But it meant upheaval from the depths, and the time was to come when the surface should feel the stir. To ignore misery in another island, misery produced by natural, unhuman causes like famine, was one thing; to ignore misery in the very midst of civilized England, misery accented if not produced by

fresh conditions of national development deliberately adopted, was another thing, and not so easy.

Nineteenth century literature, then, is the expression of a period profoundly different from any that had gone before. The times of arrest in which Swift wrote are over; the stately and simple movement of national expansion in the Renascence lies far in the past; the majestic immobility of the feudal system is hard for even the imagination to reproduce. In the modern world, all things waver, safeguards and protections seem to elude the hand that would grasp them, and forces both occult and obvious work in bewildering complexity, moving at once toward destruction and renewal.

The greatest safeguard of true order as of true liberty — the Christian Church — is singularly little in evidence during the first half of the nineteenth century. As we remember the rôle of the Church in the eighteenth century, we cannot wonder that when the time of social trial came, she should have been found pitifully wanting. Christianity has factors both revolutionary and conservative: and there are crises where each is needed. But probably every one would now agree that the Church made a grievous mistake when, in the mighty upheaval of thought and life at the end of the last century, she allied herself with the conservative forces of respectability. She could not do otherwise: her social fervors and her spiritual vitality always ebb and flow together, and that was the period of her spiritual ebb-tide. But the result was inevitable and righteous, — she was given sor-

rowfully little share in the great onward movement of life. The spiritual ideals of any age are to be read best through its imaginative art: this art, in the England of the early nineteenth century, is not Christian; indeed, it is barely cognizant of Christianity. Neither poetry nor prose draws its social passion from her inspiration, nor solves its social problems through her aid. It would have been a bitter thing to Langland, and even to More, to see the Christian Church least effective at the time of most heart-searching change.

Thus unguided, unrelated, helpless, with foundations slipping away in all directions, the thought of the century began. No one man could express such a period. We can select one writer to be a fair representative of the Middle Ages, of the Renascence, of the eighteenth century: to gain even hints of the social moods, desires, and sorrows of modern times, we must know not one author only, but many. Each author expresses not a stable state of things, but one which, whether he knows it or not, is in constant flux under his very eyes. To understand the social bearing of modern literature is then not easy, but the attempt is rewarding as well as difficult.

The heirs of the Revolution were the English poets; and to study the social ideals of our literature and leave them out is almost to omit Hamlet from his play. Yet their poetry is too great to handle as a detail, and the scope of this book will not allow a more extended treatment. Their splen-

did ideal of love and freedom, of "joy in widest commonalty spread," is part of our national inheritance; a little care is needed to prevent us from mistaking or minimizing its scope. From Wordsworth to Byron, the poets were shaken and shaped by the political revolution, with its swift, dramatic, tragic sequence from hope to despair; of the profounder industrial changes at work, they were dimly if at all conscious. Yet the aim of all their passion was social. They employed political terminology, for revolutionary thought placed what we now see to have been an over-stress on forms of government, but their political opinions were simply means to an end; and that end was the opportunity for full life, spiritual and natural, thrown open to every son of man.

In the imagination of the revolutionary period one more fact must be noted: the new seriousness with which it took itself and its function. These dreamers were probably the first English poets to believe that their visions might actually affect public thought and social achievement. To them

> "Not favored spots alone but the whole earth,
> The beauty wore of promise,"[1]

and they firmly believed that henceforth not only they, but all men of vision, —

> "Were called upon to exercise their skill,
> Not in Utopia, — subterranean fields,
> Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where,
> But in the very world, which is the world
> Of all of us, — the place where in the end,
> We find our happiness, or not at all."

[1] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, book xi.

The feeling that it was a direct force to act on affairs imparted a new responsibility to art and a new earnestness to idealism. Through ridicule, contention, denial, this feeling has persevered.

The poetry of the revolution did its work, bequeathed a great ideal, and passed away. By 1825, the voices of the poets were silenced. In the decade between 1830 and 1840, fresh phases of social passion sought expression through a different instrument. These phases we shall try to follow.

II

Poetry and prose have changed places in the Victorian Age. During the revolutionary period, great passions swayed the poets, small fancies the writers of prose; and Wordsworth and Shelley were larger men than Lamb, Hazlitt, or De Quincey. But as time went on, poetry turned away from the wide love for humanity and for freedom. It became preoccupied with the elaboration of form, and with meditation on the privacies of the soul; and prose, pressing nearer to the larger life, and expressing more fully the social interests and passions of men, took the lead which it still keeps, in variety, vigor, and power.

The change was inevitable. For poetry subsists on visions: and visions the modern social situation has not offered. Shelley's ideal was a fleeting glory. Hardly more than one generation could cherish the simple faith that if once the powers that be are destroyed, the race will enter without

delay its happy heritage of freedom. Even while the poets were chanting pæans to Liberty, the gloomy shadow of industrial slavery, unobtrusive, unnoted, was gathering over the land. All through our own days, beneath the superficial spread of political Republicanism, the silent, mighty, agonizing expansion of Democracy has been opening abysses of incertitude and dark inquiry into which men fear to gaze. Under these circumstances, we cannot wonder that poets have betaken themselves to the inner life, and have abandoned the wider enthusiasms of their forerunners, with confidence in the wisdom of their social solutions and ambitions. It is indeed somewhat exasperating as well as humorous to hear Swinburne, or some other pseudo-Shelley, occasionally echoing the old inspiration, and chanting a dithyramb against kings, or an ode to political freedom. If, as some surmise, a new and troubling ideal is astir in society, no fear but in the fullness of time the poet will come to voice it. Meanwhile, prose, the more flexible instrument, the art-form of democracy, which can solace itself with problems when faith is denied, thrills with the contemporary interest which poetry disregards.

From the days of "Sartor Resartus," English prose has assumed a social attitude. Its new dignity, its volume, scope, and importance, are due largely, though of course not wholly, to the candor and audacity with which it has rendered the larger collective facts, the fearful questions and tentative theories, of an epoch more and more absorbed in

social problems. The novelists and essayists who have swayed the public most have had varying claims to attention; but all with one accord have been social critics. The novelists give us their criticism chiefly through picture, the essayists through analysis. Consider, compare; look at these pictures, study these analyses. Follow, in a word, the social aspect of the work of men of letters from 1830 to 1880. We shall trace the growth of a new factor in consciousness: the awakening and the gradual self-assertion of the social conscience.

Our subject confines us to the development of the new thought in England. But we must not forget that all over Europe the same mighty forces have been heaving, and have often stirred hearts to more dramatic outbursts of passion and desire than are found among the sober Anglo-Saxons. The magnificent social fiction of Russia, with its baffling union of the primeval and the outworn, of harsh realism and mystic fervor, begins with Gogol, Dostoyevsky and Turgénieff, to find in Tolstoi a master so compelling, that all Europe stops to hear the stories told to peasants, and to watch the shoemaker at his bench. In France, the socialistic Utopias of 1848 find semi-lyrical expression in the lovely stories of Georges Sand's social period, — "Le Meunier d'Angibault," and "Le Compagnon du Tour de France," as well as in Hugo's immeasurable and memorable dream, "Les Misérables;" while to-day a book like Zola's "Germinal" shows that in modern Paris, in the midst of much that is trivial and morbid, a large social

issue can still be largely conceived. The names of Ibsen, Sudermann, and Hauptmann suggest the keenness with which Northern nations are analyzing certain phases of the social problem. All this imaginative literature, with its Slavic, Latin, or Germanic qualities, exhales a more impassioned unrest, a wilder inspiration, than the social writings of England. Through it sounds a more melancholy wail of sorrow over the wide pain of the unprivileged. This is natural: in nineteenth century Russia the situation is far more obviously though not more profoundly dramatic than in a land where constitutional "liberty" and general suffrage impart a delusive aspect of peace. The sweeping audacity of some of these Continental books is unsurpassed. Yet through all differences of racial situation and temperament, one subject and one impulse control the imagination of the modern world. In the significant literature of every European nation, we may trace the growth of what we have called a new factor in the life of the race.

If, turning from these wide and adventurous wanderings to the little province explored by the English, we ask which authors of the Victorian Age among those no longer living have played the most vital part in the evolution of social ideals, the answer comes clear. From 1830 to 1880 no men of pure letters so held the public ear as Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold. Carlyle's "French Revolution," that splendid elegy of a dying world and birth-song of a world to be, won for the author a tardy fame in 1837; and from that day to 1860, he was

without question the greatest force among English thinkers. After that time, his vital power waned; but it was in 1860 that Ruskin's "Unto this Last," showing the popular art-critic in a wholly new light, first amazed, then angered his wide audience; and from this time till well into the eighth decade of the century, the social writings of Ruskin continued their passionate pleading. Before 1880, however, a new writer was voicing the advanced ideals of his generation, and the brilliant social criticism of Matthew Arnold expressed a fresh phase of thought, tenacious in influence. His books might be a little disheartening, did they mark the end of our social literature. They were not the end: they marked simply the conclusion of an epoch.

Three men of any modern nation more diverse in antecedents, temperament, interests, than these three essayists, it would perhaps be impossible to find. Carlyle, the prophet, was of peasant origin, indifferent to beauty and to delicacy. Ruskin, the dreamer, was the son of a rich merchant, softly born and bred. Arnold, observer, scoffer, silenced poet, sprang from the professional class, the intellectual élite of England. Carlyle's kinship was with Germany, Ruskin's with Italy, Arnold's with France. Carlyle's eyes were in his conscience, Ruskin's in his heart, Arnold's in the normal place, his head. Each turned away from the dominant interest of his youth, — history, art-criticism, or poetry, — to focus the most earnest thought of his prime sternly and earnestly on the social anoma-

lies and paradoxes of modern life. The common features in their social diagnosis ought assuredly to be worth noting.

In the ninth decade of our century, after these men were silenced, there appeared in England a new social force. It introduced new lines of cleavage. It put a new face on the social problem. To the recognition of this force, contemporary literature has been busy in adjusting itself. The first fifty years of Victoria's reign form, then, an epoch which we may well consider by itself. It is an epoch of unmeasured significance, both actual and germinal.

Before we take up this epoch in detail, we must signal the great work of the Victorian novel. For with vivid, swift development, it has pictured what the essayists discussed. It gives us a series of social documents of the highest importance; their value to be more and more felt as the conditions it depicts become historic. At the very beginning of the period, fiction turned away from donjon and tourney, and sought for background the street, the club, the England of to-day. With occasional lapses into romanticism, it has remained insistently modern. The trend toward social interest has been only too strong, at times, for artistic freedom, From "Oliver Twist" to "Sir George Tressady," social pictures, social problems, fill the scene. Dickens and Thackeray uncovered and revealed the social layers of early Victorian England. About 1850, their simple reproductions gave place to the novel of protest and arraignment; this in

the later decades yielded to the novel of constructive suggestion, whether in the form of avowed literary Utopias, or of schemes for social salvation in would-be realistic garb. We have had indeed no social fiction so great as that of Russia: but we have had Dickens and Thackeray; we have had George Eliot, George Meredith, and Thomas Hardy; we have had for lesser folk, Reade, Trollope, Kingsley, Disraeli, Macdonald. Our social novels illustrate and supplement our social essays. With even greater clearness, they show the appearance of new dramatic forces upon the stage.

Beneath all this literature, with its strong social preoccupation, lies what? A strange and contradictory civilization which we cannot yet interpret; tingling with self-consciousness, yet unaware of much in its own tendencies; decadent and infantile, with the mighty force of youth and the tremulous caution of age; — a civilization with a fuller ideal of freedom than was ever before known for its hope, and a new form of bondage in which millions are held for its achievement. Our literature has confronted a social situation dramatic, difficult, and complex. Many episodes of this situation it expresses directly. Now, history shows Chartism, and in Carlyle's essay, in "Alton Locke," in the Correspondence of Kingsley and Maurice, we catch the appalled surprise with which intelligent England first heard the cry of the dispossessed. Now, the beautiful and visionary ardors of the French Revolution of 1848 find faint reflection even in the dull Anglo-Saxon mirror.

Now, early Trades-Unionism slips furtively upon the stage, in Dickens' "Hard Times," Reade's "Put Yourself in His Place," and Mrs. Gaskell's "Mary Barton." Read "Yeast," and the condition of the agricultural poor is forced upon us; "Daniel Deronda," and the Hebrew problem, with all its romance and mystery, captures the mind. In our own days, if we let our thought glide on to a somewhat later period, fiction and fact have drawn almost bewilderingly near.

But our modern books do far more than illustrate phases of history: through them, the higher consciousness of the age dimly feels its way. For the author — leader, critic, opposer of his generation though he may be — is yet always mysteriously compelled to utter the age he may despise. Reading these books chronologically, we follow the unconscious changes in public sentiment: its varying emphases, theories, advances, recoils. Are such changes mere bewildered fluctuations, false starts of men lost in the dark? In the presence of the modern situation, social, industrial, political, thinker after thinker relapses into helplessness. Some offer panaceas. Some take refuge in criticising these panaceas. Some betake themselves to comforting and sedative confidence in the laws of nature. What if, watching the workings of earnest minds, we find a steady trend of thought in one direction? Retrospect is true prophecy, and we may come to recognize through all vagary and contradictory clamor the slow advance of a great idea. A mighty struggle for social salvation, not yet fully

in evidence, but inexorably preparing, lies behind all incidents of modern life and art. The great social literature before 1880 reveals the gathering of the forces. To discover the issue was the work of that period. To face it is the work of our own.

## CHAPTER II

### SOCIAL PICTURES: DICKENS AND THACKERAY

If its social interest does not preserve the early Victorian novel, what will? Not the qualities for which its contemporaries hailed it. Before Dickens' vaunted pathos, the modern reader is likely, with Andrew Lang and Pet Marjorie, to remain "more than usual calm." His crude plots, his coarse and heavy melodrama, have lost vitality. His humor is real, and mere contagious high spirits do much to preserve him: yet humor, like salt, can keep a good thing alive, but cannot long lend interest to a poor one. In Thackeray's books, we find a far more permanent charm: yet his endless prolixity, and the affected ease of his confidences, do not delight us as they did our fathers. In characterization, the latter-day novel has advanced with startling rapidity. Dickens has no characters at all, properly speaking; and though Thackeray's touch is much finer, all his famous keenness of analysis, compared with the best French or Russian work, dissects only the tissue nearest the skin.

These authors are at the beginning of realistic art. They cannot individualize. What keeps them alive, and will never lose its power, is the

vividness of their social delineation. The first realists to treat the modern world, they see that world as a whole. Men appear to them in social groups. They catch environments and types; persons elude them. How thronged are their books with figures! The novelist to-day concentrates his light on one or two, or on a small group of contrasting characters. There are seventy-five people in "Our Mutual Friend;" sixty in "Vanity Fair." Turn over rapidly the pages of Thackeray and Dickens: you have walked through streets, you have been to evening parties, you have glanced at home-interiors simply to pass on, you have become slightly more intimate with club and inn and political meeting, but deep into the soul of the individual man you have never paused to look. You have passed modern society in review.

The flash-light of imagination in Thackeray and Dickens falls most brightly upon London. Here the modern city makes its first appearance in art. London! Not the delightful "town" of the eighteenth century novel, with its seductive gayeties, whence, nevertheless, the sedan-chair of the lovely Miss Byron reaches in a few moments the dangerous seclusion of the fields; but London as we know it, a fevered world, including cities within cities, possessing through all its heterogeneous parts a unity almost terrible: the great ganglion quivering with the vibrations of the whole nervous system of England. What a place! Where shall we find its likeness in the scenery of the earlier imagination, classic or Christian? Miss

Austen, in the last generation, in the very heyday of the romantic imagination, had written her modest and undying sketches of the life she knew, the tranquil life that lingered unchanged in the by-ways of England. Her conditions and temperament conspired to impose limitations which make her art perhaps more enduring than that of her great successors, since from very scarcity of material she was forced to individualize after much our present manner. But on account of these very limitations, her work has slight value as social evidence to the wider phases of contemporary life. It is this value which the books of Dickens and Thackeray possess supremely. The unconscious excitement, the largeness of manner, with which they depict whole classes and the social centre of England, make their novels documents of a high order of importance to the critic who would understand English life in 1840.

The two authors, taken as a whole, give us a bird's-eye view of the entire social structure. One begins where the other ends, and only in rare cases do their provinces intersect.

Dickens starts in the depths. His earliest triumphs were won by studies in the lowest social strata. The "submerged tenth," to use the modern phrase, — the criminal class, and those victims of society who in their turn prey upon society, — gain new vividness in his pages. Through "Oliver Twist," cheap melodrama though it now seem to us, the English public learned for the first time to recognize the touch of common humanity in

murderer and prostitute. In the portraits of Smike in "Nicholas Nickleby," Jo in "Bleak House," Tom Pinch, Little Nell, and many others, we trace the awakening of the modern sense of compassion for the poor and destitute. Starting from these lowest social types, the genius of Dickens moves with ardor and ease among the wide ranks of the common people, and dwells in keen, contagious, merry affection on all their salient traits. This invasion of literature by the illiterate is almost without precedent in English books.

Conventions a-plenty still cling, indeed, to Dickens. Not once does he dare draw his nominal hero or heroine from the lower classes; and the insipid young gentlemen and ladies who fill these rôles witness to the inadequacy of his genius when it works away from its true home, — the heart of the people. It is the great world of trade that he shows us, especially of retail trade: the small shopkeepers and peddlers, the dolls' dressmakers, the dancing-masters, also the lower grades of professional folk, nurses, lawyers' clerks, surgeons' apprentices, sextons, and the like. Let him try to give the masters of these delectable immortals, and immediately we have costumes, not men. Dick Swiveller lives forever; who can remember the name of his employer?

Dickens' environment matches his people. How intensely he has made us know it: the London of the lower middle class! The grimy, dreary streets; the little shops, smelling of tallow; the warehouses by the river; the prison, the Court of Chancery,

the cheap inns and eating-houses, the cosy interiors with the sense of the counter in the front; all these scenes and many others, from the daily life of the great unprivileged throng of men, crowd upon the memory. No other novelist has so contagious a visualizing power. We see the Cratchits' home with Tiny Tim in it; Newman Noggs in the cold counting-room; little David pasting labels on the blacking-bottles, in company with Mealy Potatoes; Sam Weller cleaning the boots in the inn court-yard; Mr. Stiggins enjoying the society of the portly sisters in grace. What author has ever shown with such width, variety, and rich sympathy all phases of popular life? The people, moreover, all act in character. They rarely allow us to forget their occupations. Their actions and their talk smack of the shop. And, indeed, of what, except the shop, should Dickens' people talk? They possess no resources, they have no manners. As soon as he tries to enter the world where propriety and pretty behavior rule, Dickens becomes absurd.

Not so with Thackeray. Manners are his one solace in a dreary world. The charming behavior of his people goes far toward making us forget and forgive their morals. "Society," technically speaking, is his province, and his social interests begin at just the point where those of Dickens end. When, in his deepest condescension, he stoops to a merchant, as in old Sedley or Osborne, he is in the region where Dickens' social imagination takes its most daring flight. But Thackeray is more at

home in that polite world where trade, if practiced, is never mentioned. He allows us to associate with very great personages; the presence even of royalty is once or twice hinted at his parties. Titles are sprinkled through his books with careless ease. Professional people, even the most successful, are introduced with an ironical little air of apology. The drawing-room and the club are his arena, as the street and the inn are the arena of Dickens. When Thackeray leaves this region of good breeding and pretty ways, of frivolity, wit, and charm, it is to show the parasitical fringe that depends on the world polite. He is never more felicitous than in this province, hobnobbing with the servants who imitate, and the adventurers who pursue, the great. The rollicking fun with which he slyly describes life below stairs, and his keen knowledge of the *déclassé* throng that seeks to elbow its way into the sacred inclosure of fashion, are nearly the finest factors in his art.

Though Dickens and Thackeray live in the same city, and work in a way on the same material, their worlds barely touch. One region alone they have in common, — literary Bohemia: David Copperfield may well have met Pen and Warrington at the Black Kitchen.

Certain great social omissions are notable in their work. They do not know the agricultural poor, whom Kingsley was to recognize in "Yeast," and George Eliot was to immortalize. They fight rather shy of clergymen. Nor is even Dickens fully aware of that silent throng on whom rested

the whole social fabric: the productive class. His people, workers though they be, live by selling, not by making. His knowledge, though not his sympathy, fails when he approaches industrial conditions, and the slight, pathetic figures of Rachel and Stephen Blackpool, in "Hard Times," are almost his only examples of manual laborers. The time of the proletariat in art has not yet come.

Yet with all exceptions made, what range of social observation in these two novelists! What marvelous pictures of our multiform life! Through their achievement, modern English civilization becomes, with much that it connotes, an imaginative reality, arrested, undying.

The worlds they depict are not uncorrelated, however separate. For the world of Dickens exists that the world of Thackeray may live; makes its gowns, cares for its horses, officers its prisons, provides its food, its inns, its dancing-lessons, its coffins. All this incessant ferment and bustle that pervade Dickens, this preoccupation with material things, is to the end that the personages of Thackeray may lead their leisurely existence of intrigue and ambition, of winning manners and mean actions, untouched by sordid care. Trade and society ignore each other in these books; but they are tied together by innumerable finest threads, so that however they may face in opposite directions, they can never move apart.

What are the distinctive features of this social order?

The first obvious fact about it is that it is filled,

riddled, created by money: commercial to the core. Dickens' world is absorbed in the making, Thackeray's in the spending, of money. In Dickens, commercial prosperity, or the reverse, is the usual environing action. In Thackeray, money, if less discussed, is the anxious sub-consciousness of society at large. To gain it by speculation or dubious means is regarded as natural though undesirable. Indiscreet questions are rarely asked of its possessor. It is the passport of fashion, and is rapidly becoming, though not yet confessed, the measure of station. The old terms, — birth, breeding, culture, — are still asserted, still in use on the surface. Below the surface, the money standard is silently pushing its way, pressing these more ideal considerations out of sight.

Perhaps this state of things seems to us too natural for comment. Suppose, then, we turn back for a moment to the fictitious world of the eighteenth century. Recall the sketches in the "Spectator," the novels of Fielding and Richardson; recall even Thackeray's own "Henry Esmond," with its marvelous reproduction of Queen Anne society. Conditions are utterly changed. Society is coarse, if you will; illiterate, superficial, and frivolous; cheerfully acquiescent in a religion of common sense, and an absurd canon of etiquette for the "young person." But mercenary it is not. Even Swift's cruel sarcasm leaves this special taint unhinted. For the image of a civilization that has become mercantile, we must turn to the fiction of the early Victorian age.

The period which Thackeray and Dickens describe was that of England's greatest commercial prosperity. A new world had been born. Industrial democracy was in its vigorous prime. Railways, telegraphs, manufactures, material resources in general, were developing with breathless rapidity. The wealth of the country, as the famous phrase had it, was advancing by leaps and bounds. Feudalism had gone at last, and a mercantile plutocracy had taken its place.

No one can claim that modern civilization, as seen through modern novels, is beautiful. Imagine an Athenian of the golden age set a-walking in the London dear to Dickens. Look through his eyes at the flare of the street-lights in the dim fog that overhangs the sordid place. Smell the rank odor with which the atmosphere is charged. Watch the crowds that hasten by: stunted or stout, but always unlovely, always with some ugly accented trait, emphasized often into a deformity amusing only to a diseased imagination. Follow these people to their homes or haunts. Hear their talk, redolent of the streets, marked with the hideous cockney blur which Dickens has immortalized. Note their coarse pleasures, their heavy eating and drinking, their dreary lives, enlightened, to be sure, by many kindly human traits, but strangely devoid, not only of charm, but of higher interests of art and thought and action. These are the seething lower ranks of the society formed by trade. Their life is rendered with unerring fidelity by Dickens' instinct for the picturesque. Whatever redeeming

features it may possess, it is not beautiful; it is irremediably vulgar.

From vulgarity, the gentle world of Thackeray turns away its eyes. And rightly. For if a truly gracious life, endowed with dignity, purity, and charm, can be produced among the few by the subjection and sacrifice of the many, why count the human cost? The perfect flower of a noble aristocracy has always been held worth a large and grimy root of toiling multitudes. In Thackeray, fiction describes for the first time the modern aristocracy produced by a commercial régime. What shall be said of it?

Every society is known by its heroisms. When we think of the Middle Ages, the image of the Knight rests distinct at the heart of our conception. The splendid eulogy over the dead Lancelot sums the ideal: "And thou were the kindest man that ever strake with sword; and thou were the goodliest person that ever came within press of knights; and thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest." We have seen the ideal shift in the sixteenth century from knight to gentleman; but the main lines were unchanged, and the age produced a brood of heroes of glorious type. Even the eighteenth century could boast its Sir Charles Grandison. He had his good points, that magnificent gentleman, however funny he may appear to us; the chief trouble with him was that he had no prototype in the world of fact,

such as was possessed, unfortunately for decency, by his rival hero, Tom Jones. The deterioration of the hero was beginning, but it was not accomplished. Who are the heroes of the Victorian Age?

Is there anything more mournful, is there anything more undeniable, than the dearth of heroes in Victorian fiction? The phrase which Thackeray put on the title-page of his "Vanity Fair" might serve as a general motto for his books and the books of his great colleague: "a novel without a hero." He shows us a world in which time may be pleasantly passed, — the melancholy, kindly satirist; a world in which brave men are found, moreover, and sweet women, and the prattle of little children. But it is a world without inspiration. The corruption of morals is as great in Thackeray's gentry as the corruption of taste in Dickens' shop-keepers. For if we accept the testimony of our novelists, the advantage of morals is surely with the lower classes, as the advantage of charm is with the upper. Would one rather associate with Dickens' plain people, sound at heart through all their vulgarity, with his Kenwigses, his Marchioness, his Micawbers, or with Thackeray's gay and entertaining society? Would one rather be invited to dinner by Mrs. Rawdon Crawley or by the Peggottys? Perhaps it depends upon one's temperament! But if in Thackeray society is hypocritical, in Dickens it is too often brutal; and the world of the one is thoroughly materialized by want, as the world of the other by

luxury. Nor can either show us, in modern times, a single uplifting ideal. The complex life they see presents to their eyes no causes for which men may live and die. No spiritual wind impels their society forward into the future; no inspiration breathes in it above the round of material toil, personal ambition, or family affection. What character, in any of their books, thrills to a large and noble aim? Upon whom has dawned the idea, so operative to-day, of social service? Their novels hold slight trace of social discontent or unrest, to say nothing of wide social hopes. Not one effective person in Thackeray or Dickens, unless it be poor Toby Veck, rises to challenge the existing order. Stephen Blackpool, with his sigh, "it 's aw' a muddle," is almost the solitary instance of general protest to be found. How unintelligent, as a rule, are Thackeray's good people, how bad his clever ones! He can indeed give us fair pictures of high, though usually passive devotion to honor, of touching selflessness, but where? — in the soldiers, who, apart from the mercantile world, are trained to keep ever on the watch for the blessed occasion of death; in the women, who, withdrawn from a frivolous society, preserve their goodness in seclusion, too often at the expense of their wits. Would he show us a hero more positive and effective? He turns — curious paradox — to the eighteenth century, and the lofty tone and simple nobility of "Henry Esmond" prove that Thackeray need not be cynical when he deals with a society he respects. His pessimism springs,

largely at least, from his subject, not from his soul. Dickens, on a similar quest for the heroic, flees the nineteenth century in like fashion, and places Sydney Carton's noble sacrifice in a Revolutionary setting. In the modern world as they show it, to resist mercenary marriage and foster gentle sentiments is the finest ideal presented for the women; to keep aloof from dishonor and cultivate the private and domestic virtues, all that is expected from the men. This society has forgotten its heroisms; but it has retained its martyrdoms. A sorrowful endurance is the lot of the best people of Thackeray; it is for victims, not for fighters, that our sympathy is claimed by Dickens.

In receiving the evidence of fiction, much allowance must of course be made for the personal equation. It is easy for a novelist to lower the lights and deepen the shadows in his picture; it is easy for him to let his emphasis fall too sharply here or there. Dickens doubtless looked out on the world through a consciousness that magnified deformity, Thackeray through a consciousness that darkened vice. Yet the authors themselves are the product of their time, and their very prepossessions are one form of its expression. Their personal attitude marks an advance, but not a very great advance, on the attitude of the society they describe. Thackeray, at least, is under no illusions of self-complacency. He does not admire "the way of the world," but he accepts it; and his gentle

acquiescent fatalism is never visited by the stirring thought of possible reconstruction : —

"'You are your uncle's pupil,' said Warrington rather sadly; 'and speak like a worldling.'

"'And why not?' asked Pendennis. 'Why not acknowledge the world I stand upon, and submit to the conditions of the society we live in and live by? . . . I say, I take the world as it is, and, being of it, will not be ashamed of it. If the time is out of joint, have I any calling or strength to set it right?'

"'Indeed I don't think you have much of either,' growled Pen's interlocutor." [1]

Dickens was far more alive to the suffering in the world than was Thackeray; and he was strongly influenced by Carlyle. He became therefore by deliberate intention social reformer, — and in so far the less artist. Against one social abuse after another — work-houses, schools, prisons, courts of law — he vigorously ran a-tilt; and his books, of which no one could mistake the vivid import, largely won the results he desired for them. Yet, ardent champion of the poor that he was, one cannot fail to be aware that the social theories of Dickens were genially shallow. Remedy specific abuses, reform your prisons, your schools; and what remains to be done or wished? Nothing; unless it be that society become a little more sentimental. Apply unlimited Christmas dinners; become, with one accord, cheerful, benevolent, and plump: and the social problem will be

[1] *Pendennis*, vol. ii. ch. xxiii. "The Way of the World."

solved. Indomitable faith in the kindness and tender-heartedness of humanity at large, villains excepted, was as much the centre of Dickens' conviction as an equally undisturbed assurance of its meanness was the centre of Thackeray's. This gentle and joyous optimism, however superficial it may be, goes far to relieve Dickens' grim pictures of the abnormal, and to heighten the attractiveness of his work; but it cannot be said to increase the value of his witness as a social critic or prophet.

Our first Victorian novelists, then, reflect for us a society of a new type: just forming yet unaware of its own crudeness, marked by a new cleavage of classes working at cross purposes with the old rigid lines of rank; a society in which the dignity of the old order is vanishing, but the ideal of the new has not yet appeared; a society devoid of large hopes, riddled with materialism; one in which the private virtues could indeed — as when can they not? — flourish, but in which the wider sense of social responsibility is unknown. The individualistic period of democracy, the early phases of a commercial and mercantile civilization, the new plutocracy, are mirrored in their pages.

Their work shows the social surface alone; of the deeper forces stirring below, neither was cognizant. It was into this society that Carlyle threw his "Sartor Resartus." That the book found its own is proof of a profound restlessness, of an aspiration, of a discontent, never probed by Thackeray or Dickens.

## CHAPTER III

### THE AWAKENING: "SARTOR RESARTUS"

THE representative author of serious prose in the England of 1830 was undoubtedly Macaulay. He was a young man of thirty, and he had already been famous five years. The cheerfulest of writers, his well-informed mind, whether snubbing poor Southey's laments over the encroachments of the factory system, or extolling the advantages of the Baconian philosophy, simply reveled in hearty approval of things as they were. In the familiar third chapter of his History, "The State of England in 1685," he expressed his full contentment. The chapter is a comparison of the national life in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries: a splendidly eloquent and rhetorical outpouring of self-congratulation and righteous pride.

Macaulay chooses four towns as examples of the marvelous advance in English well-being: Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham. He describes their condition in the seventeenth century, — small, quiet, unobtrusive places. He bids us look at them now, — seething with population, proud in unrivaled productivity. He alludes with a sigh of pity to the time when buttons were not manufactured at Birmingham, and when Sheffield

did not yet "send forth its admirable knives, razors, and lancets to the farthest ends of the world." Of Manchester he tells us: "That wonderful emporium, which in population and wealth far surpasses capitals so much renowned as Berlin, Madrid, and Lisbon, was then a mean and ill-built market-town, containing under six thousand people." In short, these towns "have, within the memory of persons still living, grown to a greatness which this generation contemplates with wonder and pride, not unaccompanied by awe and anxiety."

This is the attitude of the sensible and self-satisfied Liberalism which thought itself in the van of progress in 1840. Of late years, the factory towns of England are used to point a different moral. They may be contemplated with "wonder," "anxiety," and even "awe," but hardly with "pride."

The first note of protest destined to carry conviction to a complacent England sounded in 1833 from the Scottish moors. It was not the voice of a young man. The days of boy lyrists of freedom were over. Wordsworth and Coleridge were to chant no more "Lyrical Ballads" in the heyday of their youth, nor was a new Shelley to arise, arraigning society with the wondering grief of a child. The interpreters of the mature century were to be mature men.

Carlyle was not only the contemporary of Macaulay, but his elder by five years. Yet a new order smouldered in his soul. In 1833, while Macaulay was in the prime of fame, Carlyle had not yet found his audience. Through "Sartor Resartus"

he found it, or rather he created it. It is well known how the book, written in the author's thirty-eighth year, was offered in vain from publisher to publisher. Printed at last by installments in a daring magazine, it found only two avowed admirers: a Roman Catholic priest in Ireland, and a young ex-Unitarian minister named Emerson in the New England across the seas. It was first published as a whole, to our lasting satisfaction, in America, where the Transcendental movement, inspired by this same Emerson, gave it welcome. The first English edition did not appear till 1838; and it is clear that even when before the public, the little volume took time to make its way.

We cannot wonder. To the generation of 1840, "Sartor" must have been completely baffling. It scouted modern civilization *in toto*. It violated every literary tradition. It jeered at the most cherished conventions, religious and social. Instead of well-marshaled paragraphs, it presented a chaos of seemingly incoherent quotations; instead of lucid dogmatism, bewildered inquiry; instead of tangible theme, definitely treated, a phantasmagoria of ironical observation and mystical dream. What reception could be expected? The book was treated with convenient neglect by the subjects of that wide kingdom of the obvious, where Macaulay reigned supreme.

For us looking back, however, "Sartor" is not hard to place. It is the last, perhaps the noblest utterance of the early romantic movement in England; and it is also the first notable and sincere

expression of the attitude which seeks to see modern life with no glamour of delusion. Thus it belongs both to the future and to the past, to romanticism and to realism: a germinal book indeed.

All over Europe, the romantic temper of adventure and challenge was at work under the shallow crust of acquiescence: and the smoke and strain of the romanticism of the Continent are in Carlyle's work. "Le romantisme, c'est le libéralisme dans l'art," Victor Hugo had lately written in the preface to "Hernani;" and current "libéralisme" had a wider scope than "l'art." Young French men of letters, ignorant of the force with which they played, might amuse themselves with the Divine Right of Kings and other feudal properties; full of the "haine du bourgeois," they might try to escape middle class Philistinism by taking refuge in the salon of the aristocracy instead of in the heart of the people. But their royalist ardors were brief, and Hugo the champion of Charles X. was already becoming Hugo the champion of the democracy. The real animus that inspires romantic literature is revolution, not reaction. It is profoundly iconoclastic. The philosophical idealism which Germany had contributed to the romantic movement was in the long run incompatible with respect for the established fact. Into this idealism Carlyle had thirstily plunged, and "Sartor" is saturated with it. The tone of the book has little in common with that æsthetic mysticism which glorifies the poems of Coleridge and Keats, and is potent in all the great English poets of the romantic

revival; it is a spiritual mysticism that searches the very springs of life.

"Can the Earth, which is but dead, and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality, and are alive?"

The man who could thus feel the illusion of phenomenal existence and the power of the soul could not be expected to hold in safe and narrow tenacity to the existing social order.

But the work of romanticism could not be accomplished till it turned not only philosopher, but realist. It had to leave coquetry with turrets and armor, and to seek satisfaction for its audacious instinct in wooing the wonder of the actual world. It had to bring the idealism won from speculation to bear on the social facts about it. The moment when it made the change is profoundly significant. This moment "Sartor Resartus" preserves. The romantic temper, deepened, Germanized, and brought with grim resolution to face, not the dreams of the past, but the facts of the present, — such is the mood of this strange book.

It made its way in time, as new life will. It found those for whom it was written: the children of the future. To the young men of England, it remained for more than one generation a sort of gospel. What they first discovered and chiefly valued was doubtless its noble religious message. Teufelsdröckh, the hero, was the earliest in England of those spiritual sons of romance — a John Inglesant, a Marius the Epicurean — whose inner fortunes the reading public has shared with so keen a sympathy. In his experience the age found what

many of its earnest children desired: the rejection of creeds with the renewal of faith.

However, the real import of "Sartor Resartus" is only in part spiritual and personal. The vibrations of the French Revolution were still in the air, and the social animus of the book is throughout as strong as the religious. When we first see the little Professor Teufelsdröckh, he is toasting "The Cause of the Poor, in God's name, and the Devil's," amid the plaudits of Weissnichtwo. Carlyle takes all pains to emphasize the twofold sweep of his radicalism. At the very outset, he couples with the "clear, logically founded transcendentalism" of his hero, a "meek, silent, deep-seated sans-culottism," and the "sans-culottism" remains at least as prominent as the "transcendentalism" in the Professor's mystifying personality. The mock horror with which Carlyle cites his utterances is never so charged with hidden zest and even mischief, as when Teufelsdröckh breaks into some sweeping attack on social creeds. At the queer end of the story, the bewildering hero vanishes from the scene; apparently, though the hint is given with bated breath, he has betaken himself to the society of the Saint Simonians, those early French socialists whose vagaries, as we know from other sources, had always a certain attraction for Carlyle. The word Socialism is never mentioned in the book: half a century was to pass before the sound of that word was to strike habitual terror to English ears; but into socialistic fellowship, nevertheless, disappears from view the first hero of the modern social movement in English literature.

The spiritual and social elements of the book are indeed so united that separation is impossible. A "speculative radical, and that of the very darkest tinge," like the Professor, convinced that "custom doth make dotards of us all" "and weaves air-raiment for all the Spirits of the Universe," no sooner discovers the central truth that "man is a spirit" than he proceeds to a supreme disregard of man's "clothes," "acknowledging for the most part in the solemnities and paraphernalia of civilized life, which we make so much of, nothing but so many cloth-rags, turkey-poles, and 'bladders with dried peas.'" The whimsical "clothes-philosophy" was probably the most felicitous form in which Carlyle's universal challenge could have been uttered. Who can forget the startling chapter in which Teufelsdröckh forces us to look at the World out of Clothes: society in its "birthday-suit," mother-naked, engaged in its accustomed pursuits? The whole book produces much the rueful effect of such a scene, and conventions of society and religion still disappear with equal celerity as we turn its pages.

To a modern reader, indeed, the social teachings of "Sartor Resartus" strike home with more freshness than the religious. It was in every sense a work of transition, but the spiritual transition which it signaled has been accomplished long ago, and its message comes to us with force truly, but not with novelty. The social challenge of the book, on the other hand, rings audacious as ever, for the social transition of which it gives perhaps the first hint

in imaginative prose has lasted seventy years, and is still in progress.

The starting-point of the entire book is that sense of the social organism which we sometimes vaunt for a recent discovery. To Carlyle, society is no result of a "social contract," no fortuitous collection of individuals; it is a living unity of fellowship. As a direct consequence of this abstract conception his thought thrills with the intense consciousness, so alien to our forefathers, of the silent multitudes by whose toil we live. "Sartor Resartus" is one of the first books in which the modern working-class is recognized and its condition noted. The thought of Langland, unheeded through the centuries, finds here at last an echo, and the reverence for labor, revived by Wordsworth, is reiterated with new earnestness: "Hardly entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our conscript on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred." "Two men I honor and no third: First, the toil-worn Craftsman that with earth-made Implement laboriously conquers the earth and makes her man's. . . . A second man I honor and still more highly: him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable: not daily bread but the bread of life." From this deep feeling for our organic unity with the workers, it naturally follows that Carlyle makes the connection that Swift failed to make, because he lacked the feeling. Luxury and poverty, in "Sartor Resartus," appear no longer as puzzling, independent phenomena. They are sternly

related. Carlyle's contrasting pictures of Poor Slaves and Dandies, striking studies of social extremes as were ever drawn, are placed side by side with highest art. They might be printed in the Labor Press to-day, unchanged except for a few details in the costume of the dandy.

Several generations have passed, and we see the instinct which animates Carlyle's thought so far, almost universal. Yet there are ways in which he is distinctly in advance of us still. For his accent, unlike our own, falls constantly on the non-material aspects of social need. He is alive to the physical distress of the poor; but the son of a Scotch mason, inured to poverty from childhood, was no sentimentalist, nor do hardship and privation seem in themselves great evils to him. What tortures him with agony fierce and broken in expression is the thought of the multitudes spiritually disinherited; by the very conditions of modern industry, consigned to mental apathy worse than physical death.

"It is not because of his toils that I lament for the poor: we must all toil or steal (howsoever we name our stealing), which is worse; no faithful workman finds his task a pastime. The poor is hungry and athirst; but for him also there is food and drink: he is heavy-laden and weary; but for him also the Heavens send Sleep, and of the deepest; in his smoky cribs, a clear dewy heaven of Rest envelops him, and fitful glitterings of cloud-skirted Dreams. But what I do mourn over is that the lamp of his soul should go out; that no ray of

heavenly, or even earthly knowledge should visit him; but only, in the haggard darkness, like two spectres, Fear and Indignation bear him company. Alas, while the Body stands so broad and brawny, must the Soul lie blinded, dwarfed, stupefied, almost annihilated! Alas, was this too a breath of God; bestowed in Heaven, but on earth never to be unfolded! — That there should one man die ignorant who had capacity for Knowledge, this I call a tragedy, were it to happen twenty times in the minute, as by some computations it does." [1]

It is at once inspiring and saddening to find at the very outset of our social literature a passage like this, with its profoundly spiritual construction of the social problem. For Carlyle's attitude is still very rare. The right of every man to material subsistence has become a familiar thought since the days of the old economists, and the public now at least laments, if it does not remedy, the stunted physique and bad physical conditions of the wage-earner. But the right of the spirit to life is a claim strange to the majority. Most people take it comfortably for granted that society has done its full duty to a man when it enables him, by the devotion of all his waking hours, to provide comfortably for his keep. In the miners' strike of 1897 in Pennsylvania, it was said that the death of a mule was regarded by the operators of the mines as a greater pecuniary loss than the death of a man. Why? It took money to replace the mule: none to replace the miner. "And yet there must

[1] Book iii. ch. iv. "Helotage."

be something wrong," wrote Carlyle in 1833: "A full-formed Horse will, in any market, bring from twenty to as high as two-hundred Friedrichs d'or: such is his worth to the world. A full-formed Man is not only worth nothing to the world, but the world could afford him a round sum would he simply engage to go and hang himself. Nevertheless which of the two was the more cunningly-devised article, even as an Engine? Good Heavens! A white European Man, standing on his two Legs, with his two five-fingered Hands at his shackle-bones, and miraculous Head on his shoulders, is worth, I should say, from fifty to a hundred Horses!"[1]

Truly, our problems have not changed. We should be wrong, however, did we say that no advance had been made since the emotional utterances of Carlyle. He recognized the evils of unemployment and industrial waste. We have gone one step further: we have analyzed them by statistics.

While Carlyle brooded in Craigenputtock, certain Tories of the old school were thinking in lines not wholly dissimilar from his own. Wordsworth and Southey, too, felt the dangers springing unperceived from the new industrial methods. But they faced the past, he the future; for they could see the evils, but could not construe the needs of their times. Teufelsdröckh is no "Adamite," rejecting with revolutionary ardor all social forms on principle, and pleading with Rousseau for a return to

[1] Book iii. ch. iv. "Helotage."

nature; neither is he a conservative. His quest is positive, and it makes, however vaguely, for reconstruction. It is this quest which imparts the impressiveness of suspense to the mournful pages of "Sartor." Metaphor after metaphor shows in concrete glowing symbol Carlyle's one conviction: that the old order was changing, and that on the moral purpose of the people depended the nature of the new order which should be born. Let society throw aside its outworn garment, and give over cobbling this tear, that rent. Let it prepare for itself a new garment, clean and fresh. Such thought was not unknown; but in Carlyle's day it had been silenced, seemingly forever, by the resurgence of the tide of custom, — "custom, which lies upon us with a weight heavy as frost, and deep almost as life." Never was a time when it would seem more strange, more appalling, than to the England of 1840, serenely acquiescent in the things that were. The assurance of social finality was natural in the Middle Ages: comprehensible in the eighteenth century. But this assurance has something almost comical, were it not so fatuous, when we find it recurring with redoubled force in the commercial society of the early Victorian age. Based on an industrial revolution of yesterday, profoundly shaken by a recent cataclysm from which Europe had only just rallied, haunted already by mutterings from below portending future disaster, this society assumed its own permanence with conviction not to be stirred. Carlyle sounded anew in its ears the hope, the threat, of change.

He first, in sober prose, promoted what Arnold so keenly desired: the free play of consciousness round things as they are, which can loosen them from their conventional moorings. By searching hint, by mysterious allusion, by words veiled yet electric, he quickened again the dying consciousness of social renewal.

This consciousness is the starting-point of all our social thought. Even in moods most near to despair, its life-communicating power animates modern literature with a force that impels toward the unknown. We know how from the most earnest speculation of earlier centuries such instinct for renewal is absent; absent even from those whom we can see most clearly to have had the spirit of the future. Langland, in the fourteenth century, marvelously like Carlyle in many ways, with the same burning sense of social injustice, the same reverence for poverty and labor, yet rested content with a purely ethical plea for reform of spirit, and regarded king, priest, knight, and workman as parts of an immutable social order. More, with the young daring of the Renascence, dreamed an ideal state after Plato, but did not hope to see in his own day the customs of the Utopians established in England. Swift, in the century of acquiescence, criticised unsparingly, condemned unreservedly, cried out in horror, and paused. Then came the Revolution. Poets and statesmen beheld for one brief instant the vision of a new earth below a new heaven, sought wildly to realize it, failed, uttered it in one burst of song, and fell on

silence. With "Sartor Resartus" sounds again the new note: indomitable, though not triumphant. Tentative it is now; charged with apprehension and solemnity; yet none the less assured. Writing at the dawn of revolutionary science, tingling with a new historic sense, Carlyle gathers his social thought into a wide cosmic conception. "In that fire-whirlwind, Creation and Destruction proceed together; ever as the ashes of the old are blown about, do organic filaments of the New mysteriously spin themselves; and amid the rushing and the waving of the Whirlwind element come tones of a melodious Deathsong, which end not but in tones of a more melodious Birthsong. Nay look into the Fire-whirlwind with thine own eyes, and thou wilt see."[1]

Full of passion, expressing solitude and the stress of solitude, the strange little book speaks in hints elusive and abrupt. It is tentative, emotional, vague. But in it the iconoclastic work of the romantic movement at its acme finds a climax, and the new method of facing actual civilization with open soul, pitiful heart, and observant mind finds a prophecy. The book seems written by one breathless with the eager strain of his own thought. It is a torch borne by a runner in the torch-race of freedom; its flame is mingled with smoke, torn, tossed, even blown backward by conflicting winds; but it is living still, and though it may now no longer warm nor illumine, it still serves as a signal-fire.

[1] Book iii. ch. vii. "Organic Filaments."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INDICTMENT

WHAT character, in Thackeray or Dickens, can we picture reading Carlyle? Blanche Amory? She fed on Lamartine. Agnes Wickfield? Surely, though Dickens neglects to mention the fact, Miss Yonge and the "Daisy Chain" nurtured her youth. It is no reading public that the novelists show us.

Yet a reading public there was, and a thinking public also. Heart stirrings, impulses of revolt, uneasy premonitions of changes and growth, were moving below the placid social surface. In the decade of "Sartor Resartus," the Reform Bill was succeeded by the Anti-Corn-Law League; the Owenites introduced into familiar though not yet popular use the word Socialism; the first volumes of Tennyson and Browning promised the exquisite art and searching psychology of the Victorian poetry that was to follow; John Stuart Mill and Frederick Denison Maurice began to be felt in their different ways as intellectual forces, and the Oxford Movement quickened in England a spiritual revival which has proved as lasting as that inaugurated by Carlyle, and, in the long run, as charged with social suggestion. The years went

on. Chartism gathered gloomily and gloomily dispersed in the social heavens. Once more, in 1848, revolutionary idealism led to disillusion. The Christian Socialism of Kingsley and Maurice, like Chartism, arose only to vanish as a formal movement, though not as a spirit and an influence. Mazzini was in London. Pre-Raphaelitism in art awoke a new passion for romantic beauty, and, however remote in its earlier phases from social feeling, yet unconsciously fostered one of the strongest factors in the later radicalism of the century. In 1864, Karl Marx organized "The International" in London. Trades-unionism slowly and silently developed. And during the whole period, evolutionary science was reshaping the world of thought.

Through these fifty years, from 1830 to 1880, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold were reaching the ear of the privileged classes with a message essentially the same.

Underlying all their diverse books is a heartfelt arraignment of modern society. This arraignment vividly corroborates the social testimony of the novelists. The essayists dissect the same materialized civilization which Thackeray and Dickens present, and the agreement between pictures and analyses is all the more striking because unconscious.

One might go far, for instance, in illustrating the light Gallic grace and wit of Thackeray by the mournful Northern irony of Carlyle. "Not welcome, O complex anomaly!" — the exclama-

tion might well be addressed to the gentry of "Pendennis," "The Newcomes," and "Vanity Fair." Perhaps no phrases could better sum up the effect of polite society in these novels than the famous, scathing, picturesque satire lavished in "Past and Present" on the "unworking aristocracy." "A High Class without duties to do is like a tree planted on precipices, from the roots of which all the earth has been crumbling."[1] "You ask him at the year's end: 'Where is your three hundred thousand pounds? What have you realized to us with that?' He answers, in indignant surprise: 'Done with it? who are you that ask? I have eaten it; I and my flunkies and parasites and slaves, two-footed and four-footed, in an ornamental manner. *I* am realized by it to you.' It is, as we have often said, such an answer as was never before given under this sun."[2]

The irony of the old Scotch sage was never so full of scornful zest as when he directed it against the upper classes. But it was not limited to these classes. Carlyle was perhaps the first man in England to proclaim that our epic had become "tools and the man," and to signal the rise into controlling importance of the great manufacturing class. As dilettanteism seemed to him the sin of the aristocracy, so mammonism was in his eyes the great temptation of the new "millocracy." The two evils, in his saddened mind, divided the world of fact, as they sometimes seem to divide the world of contemporary fiction.

[1] Book iii. ch. viii. "Unworking Aristocracy."

[2] Book iv. ch. vi. "The Landed."

Ruskin gives less detailed social analysis than does his master; yet a trenchant sentence of his lingers in memory, as one turns the pages of some modern books. "This intense apathy," says Ruskin, "is the greatest mystery of life;" and the words suggest the hearty immersion in material interests of the mammon-worshipers in Dickens, no less than the frivolity of Thackeray's dilettantes. But it is Matthew Arnold in whose writings the social analysis of modern England reaches a memorable climax. His famous designations, Barbarians, Philistines, Populace, have a brilliance of finality about them. And they might as well have been studied from the types of fiction as from the types of life. Where shall we seek more perfect Barbarians than the Marquis of Steyne, or dear old Major Pendennis? Nay, is not even Colonel Newcome himself, though one grieve to say so, a bit of a Barbarian, with more sweetness than light about him? And the Middle Class! Where but in Arnold's Philistia lives the society of Dickens? Where else were born and bred Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupper, Mr. Snodgrass, Mrs. Nickleby, Mrs. Gummidge, Mrs. Micawber, Mr. Murdstone, Mr. Gradgrind, Mr. Cheeryble, and a host of others, whose very names proclaim their birthplace? Surely, Dickens' exuberant novels were in the critic's mind, when he described the British Philistine, with his prolific families, his animalism, his sturdy honesty, his blankness to ideas. In one tranquil terrible phrase, the critic sums up his social impression of his country. England shows "an

upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, a lower class brutalized." Bear witness, Miss Crawley, Sir Pitt, Becky, Brian Newcome; bear witness, Lady Clavering, Mrs. Gamp, Sedley, Mr. Pecksniff; bear witness, Sikes and Fagin, how truly men of imagination and critics have surveyed the same world.

To analyze the modern order was to indict it; to describe was to condemn. In the diagnosis of symptoms, our men of vision have through all the century been substantially agreed. But when they have tried to investigate the dim region of causes, widely differing facts have awaited their discovery.

The condition of the working-classes was starting-point, centre, and conclusion of the indignant thought of Carlyle. The direct evidence of the inadequacy of the shepherds, afforded by their own character, sank into insignificance beside the fearful indirect evidence offered by the suffering of the sheep. Especially, the perception of the false modes of life produced by the new manufacturing régime weighed his spirit down. Even earlier than "Sartor Resartus," in his first original essay, "Signs of the Times," published by the "Edinburgh Review" in 1829, in the company of Macaulay, are the prophetic words: "Ours is the age of machinery, in every outward and inward sense of the word. . . . On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron

fingers that ply it faster. . . . What changes this addition of power is introducing into the social system: how wealth has more and more increased, and at the same time gathered itself more and more into masses, strangely altering the old relations, and increasing the distance between the rich and poor, will be a question for Political Economists, and a much more complex and important one than any they have yet engaged in."

These words sound commonplace enough now: but they were written seventy years ago. From this time Carlyle's thought never wavered. Bewilderment grew on him and amazement deepened, as the history of Europe proceeded, and the new proletariat class developed, and England looked on; but through all confusion, he felt with increasing clearness that if disbelief in God were at the heart of disorder in the modern world, the form in which such disbelief chiefly showed itself was industrial injustice, proceeding from a competitive system. The vague tenderness and sentimental pity felt by Shelley and his fellows for the "oppressed" reappears in Carlyle, sternly focused upon the victims of the industrial order. "Life was never a May Game for men. In all times the lot of the dumb millions born to toil was defaced with manifold sufferings, injustices, heavy burdens, avoidable and unavoidable: not play at all, but hard work, that made the sinews sore and the heart sore. . . . And yet I will venture to believe that in no time, since the beginnings of society, was the lot of those dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is

even now, in the days now passing over us. It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die: the last exit of us all is in a fire-chariot of pain. But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing; to be heart-worn, weary, yet isolated, girt in with a cold universal Laissez Faire: it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead, infinite Injustice, as in the cursed iron belly of a Phalaris Bull! This is and remains forever intolerable to all men whom God has made. Do we wonder at French Revolutions, Chartisms, Revolts of Three Days? The times, if we will consider them, are really unexampled." [1]

Concerning the economic aspect of the situation, Carlyle's thought was elementary. He continued to treat, with the emotional horror of the first discoverer, problems of over-production and unemployment. The other evils that beset society, — cant, insincerity, restlessness, and the decay of true religion, — all tended in his mind to find source and cause in that social injustice which, holding a whole class in false conditions, reacted upon all other classes, and produced a feverish unrest whose origin men failed to understand. But close analysis was unknown to him.

While Carlyle was indicting society with vehement and spasmodic eloquence, Ruskin was happily writing his beautiful interpretations of beauty. In his message the English public found nothing

[1] *Past and Present*, book iii. ch. xiii. "Democracy."

repugnant or obscure, and "Modern Painters," "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," and "The Stones of Venice" met only enough opposition to impart to their popularity something the ardor of a cult. Social unrest might seem quite alien to the æsthetic revival which these books did so much to foster. But it was a wholly natural transition which led Ruskin from criticism of the fine arts to criticism of society. The last volume of "Modern Painters," in 1860, shows this transition already accomplished.

For no enthusiast could be content to interpret the art of the past to a listening England: he must seek to stimulate a living art in the present. When Ruskin turned to the present, he did not find its aspect encouraging. The first thing to awaken his social conscience was the ugliness of his country. He beheld it overrun with the products of manufacturing towns, for which he did not share Macaulay's admiration, and covered in larger areas every year with cheap, dreary, crowded buildings, only the more painful because contrasting with the pathetic remains of beauty bequeathed from ages when Manchester was not. In noting the sharp difference between the conditions that surrounded the youth of Giorgione and that of Turner, Ruskin was yet strictly within the province of æsthetics; but he was perilously near to that of social reform. Nor was a definite statement long in coming: "The beginning of art is in getting our country clean and our people beautiful."[1] "Beautiful art can only

[1] *Lectures on Art*, sec. 116.

be produced by people who have beautiful things around them and leisure to look at them; and unless you provide some elements of beauty for your workmen to be surrounded by, you will find that no elements of beauty can be invented by them." [1]

The emphasis in Ruskin's social arraignment fell then first of all on those displeasing outward conditions which had certainly never arrested nor troubled for a moment the peasant-eyes of Carlyle. But no man could stop there. The next step was to inquire into the causes of these conditions. As he inquired, he became assured that such causes lay deep in the character of the modern industrial system. And so, starting with entirely different facts, Ruskin's social diagnosis came wholly to agree with that of the austere Scotch sage whom by this time he had learned to call master. Competition, the rise of machine industry, and the suppression of hand labor; the growth of new relations between employers and employed; in short, the concentration under new conditions of an immense working-class, — these were phenomena that seemed to him all the more portentous and dangerous because society accepted them with so perfect a complacency.

Practical experiment came to the aid of general observation. Ruskin really tried to arouse in England, even taking it as it was, the creative impulse: to stimulate at least those humble decorative arts which, as he believed, must flourish before High Art, in any true sense, could appear. And here,

[1] *The Two Paths*, Lecture III.

too, the disillusion that quickens awaited him. The nearer to the life of actual wage-earners he came in his experiments, the more his sense of some great wrong was strengthened. He was accustomed in thought to the exquisite work of the Middle Ages and of the early Renascence; and he believed that all true art must be, as in these ages, the expression of a common life, and must spring from the heart of the people. But he found that even the physical healthfulness of labor was destroyed habitually by false conditions of time and pay; and that its educational connotation was destroyed, if not habitually yet in countless cases, by the mechanical character of modern industry. The craftsman of the Renascence passed instinctively into the artist, and the artist ranked himself with the craftsman, as the bottega of Donatello or of Andrea may testify; but the manual worker of to-day loses, when hardly more than a child, all spring of spontaneity, all impulse toward creation. In this respect, at least, the growth of social fellowship since Ruskin's time has only confirmed his conclusion. No one can live intimately among working-people without feeling the invisible bondage which prevents in them the evolution of the higher productive powers. In the days of handicraft, work was its own reward: it is so no longer. The professional classes possibly work as hard as manual laborers. But their work is life. The activities of teacher, doctor, lawyer, merchant, however strenuous and protracted, are interesting They employ, cultivate, delight, the higher faculties

But to iron two thousand linen collars a day, to spend the bright hours "busheling" in a tailor-shop, to carry on any one of the minute occupations introduced by the division of labor, leaves people where it found them, only a little more stupefied. The real life of the modern wage-earner must lie without, not within his trade; and he has freedom for it only in the weary evening hours after work is done, on Sundays and holidays. Philanthropists, awake to the lack of resource in the lives of working-people, are trying nowadays to give them some share in the interests that make so large a part of existence for the privileged public. They know well how all offers of delightful things — art, music, learning, even sociability — are hampered and almost nullified by the fact that those to whom they are offered have literally no leisure for enjoyment, or at best only tired odds and ends of time, after a long day's work. To this state of things one might be reconciled were it necessary and universal; but history reveals that while the material conditions of the wage-earner in the past may sometimes have been worse than at present, yet at times there have been industrial conditions that have neither suppressed personal expression nor destroyed personal freedom. John Ruskin was first to raise the cry that the arts can never flourish as a class monopoly, and that they will remain decadent until the moralizing of industry shall bring freedom to the nation as a whole. It is a cry which artists have never dropped from his day to our own.

So Ruskin was led by his very artist-nature to strong social discontent. But he did not limit himself to the æsthetic point of view. Once face to face with the pain of the world, his sensitive nature thrilled to its every phase. The outward ugliness of our sordid civilization, so oppressive to his temperament, became only type and symbol of the apathy, and vulgarity, and even the cruelty of its spirit. His later books throb with an indignation and discouragement which at times impart to his naturally ornate and flowing style a new dignity, and again break it into whimsical or extravagant expressions sadly open to misconception. The dominant strain of these books is elegiac; it is a strain which finds perhaps its fullest phrasing in the great lecture on "The Mystery of Life and its Arts."

"What has all this 'Might' of humanity accomplished, in six thousand years of labor and sorrow? What has it *done?* Take the three chief occupations and arts of men, and count their achievements. Begin with the first, the lord of them all, — agriculture. Six thousand years have passed since we were set to till the ground from which we were taken. How much of it is tilled? How much of that which is, wisely or well? . . . Then after agriculture, the art of kings, take the next head of human arts, — weaving; the art of queens, honored of all noble heathen women in the person of their virgin goddess, honored of all Hebrew women by the word of their wisest king. . . . What have we done in all these thousands of years with

this bright art of Greek maid and Christian matron? Six thousand years of weaving, and have we learned to weave? Might not every naked wall have been purple with tapestry, and every feeble breast fenced with sweet colors from the cold? What have we done? Our fingers are too few, it seems, to twist together some poor covering for our bodies. We set our streams to work for us, and choke the air with fire to turn our spinning-wheels, and, *are we yet clothed?* . . . Lastly, take the art of Building: the strongest, proudest, most orderly, most enduring, of the arts of man. . . . In six thousand years of building, what have we done? . . . The ant and the moth have cells for each of their young, but our little ones lie in festering heaps, in homes that consume them like graves; and night by night, from the corners of our streets, rises up the cry of the homeless: 'I was a stranger, and ye took me not in.'"

No such strain as this can be found in the social criticism of Matthew Arnold. His elegiac note had been abandoned when he turned from poetry to prose. It had been pure, sincere, troubling. It had dealt, not with great social facts and issues, but with the pain of the sensitive soul, ill at ease among the play of mighty forces half understood and wholly distrusted.

> "But we, brought forth and reared in hours
> Of change, alarm, surprise,
> What shelter to grow ripe is ours,
> What leisure to grow wise?
>
> "Like children bathing on the shore,
> Buried a wave beneath,

> The second wave succeeds, before
> We have had time to breathe."[1]

When the poet of the inner life turned to study of the wider aspects of civilization, he abandoned once for all any display of emotion. In appeal, invective, metaphor, he did not deal. In place of a style like that of Carlyle and Ruskin, each in his way so highly colored, impassioned, and lyrical, Arnold wrote the coolest of satire, expressed in the most pellucid of English. To pass to him from Carlyle is to pass from the scorching heat of smoky, crimson flame to a white electric flash: perhaps, of the two, the flash is the more deadly.

Arnold had a new quarrel with modern English civilization: not that it was wicked; not that it was unlovely: but that it was absurd. The son of a great educator, himself educator as well as man of letters, his attention was arrested neither by the industrial nor by the æsthetic, but by the intellectual conditions of England. When he mentions industrial unrest or distress, as in the brilliant fourth section of the chapter on "Our Liberal Practitioners," in "Culture and Anarchy," it is half-impatiently, as if adducing simply one more witness to our general folly. Seldom indeed does the misery of the wage-earners give his readers a pang. His attention is directed to the great middle class, under whose reign we live, the prosperous class which is so far the one apparent success of democracy, the solid general public for whom the labors of the proletariat are spent; and he shows that the

[1] *Stanzas in Memory of the Author of Obermann.*

results of the sacrifice are not worth while. For that which impresses him in the English public is its utter imperviousness to ideas. He finds it pig-headed, narrow, self-assertive, fanatical, devoid of sweetness, devoid of light. Yet in his own fashion, he repeats the note of the rugged old Scotch seer, for the age seems materialized to him as to his predecessors, though he deplores the effect of this materialism in the sphere of mind rather than in the sphere of morals. "The age is mechanical," Carlyle had written in 1829. "Faith in machinery," wrote Arnold in 1867, "is our besetting danger."[1] That "the cities it had built, the railroads it had made, the manufactures it had produced" constituted the glory and greatness of England, this popular idea is the chief butt of Arnold's scorn. "And if we are sometimes a little troubled by our multitude of poor men, yet we know the increase of manufactures and population to be such a salutary thing in itself, and our free-trade policy begets such an admirable movement, creating fresh centres of industry and fresh poor men here, while we were thinking about our poor men there, that we are quite dazzled and borne away, and more and more industrial movement is called for, and our social progress seems to become one triumphant and enjoyable course of what is sometimes called, vulgarly, outrunning the constable."[2] Stupidity, prejudice, and ineptitude, whether in our economic theories, our religious life,

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. i.
[2] Ch. vi.

or our literary standards, — these are the sins that Arnold tried to bring home to the intelligence of his countrymen.

So, from one point of view or another, the great arraignment of modern society on spiritual lines goes on. At times the emphasis falls on moral defects: again on æsthetic: again on intellectual; but of self-satisfaction, of exultation in the existing conditions, the thoughtful writers of the Victorian era show no trace. The moribund classes offer no heroes; among the adolescent, no common ideal has yet appeared, to make regret for the past superfluous by uplifting the banner of some high social aim: discontent is the order of the day. We have traveled far in ideas since the time of Macaulay.

It is easy to say that the modern situation offers no novelty. The moralist has always inveighed against riches, and the world has always made them the key to success. Yet the instinct of our social critics is sound. For the standard of wealth has never had a chance to prevail quite so exclusively as it threatens to do in a mercantile democracy. In society either militant or hierarchical, other standards, of rank or personal valor, have at least coexisted with the standard of money. Now neither rank nor force is devoid of spiritual significance. Each appeals to the imagination, perhaps on account of a certain personal element, because it carries a dim suggestion of past risk, audacity, sacrifice. These standards are not yet wholly obliterated either in Europe, or in America. But during a peaceful age, where industrial interests

prevail, they become fainter and fainter, till the crude material standard seems at times to be left almost in solitude, to appeal in blank candor to the children of the world.

The most impressive point of agreement among our authors is their sense of impending change; for the sense of flux and instability in the social order deepens as the century goes on. The men of 1830 believed that the revolution was past; the men of 1840, of 1860, of 1870, are at one in believing that it is to come. They live facing its approach. Of its nature they are not sure: how to meet it, they are pathetically uncertain; but that a more searching and subversive social change than the world has ever known is imminent, they are with one accord completely assured. Again and again they lift their warning note. Every five years, every ten, into a civilization feverishly and helplessly developing a competitive system, ignorant of its own tendencies, comes a cry of protest and of fear. Carlyle reiterates in every book the note of "Sartor Resartus." "There must be a new world, if there is to be any world at all," [1] wrote he in 1850. His emotional rhetoric seemed a little hysterical to the average man; but Arnold, the cool, the collected, twenty years later, took up the same strain. The very title of his most important book, "Culture and Anarchy," showed the construction placed by him upon the present order. His feeling for the gravity of the situation is all the more impressive from his habitual air of understatement: "Our

[1] *Latter Day Pamphlets*, "The Present Time."

present social organization has been an appointed stage in our growth; it has been of good use, and has enabled us to do great things. But the use is at an end, and the stage is over. Ask yourselves if you do not sometimes feel in yourselves a sense that in spite of the strenuous efforts for good of so many excellent persons among us, we begin somehow to flounder, and to beat the air; that we seem to be finding ourselves stopped on this line of advance and on that, and to be threatened with a kind of standstill. It is that we are trying to live on with a social organization of which the day is over." [1]

There is something either ludicrous or sinister, as one chooses to take it, in this steady insistence on imminent danger, during half a century of outward quietude. One call of warning and of fear echoes down the decades, and if not wearied we must be awed by the iteration. We may well ask whether it has any significance; whether the social revolution is nearer to-day than in 1840 or 1860. Men asked a similar question at intervals through the eighteenth century; they were asking it in 1788, one year before the Bastille was taken.

[1] *Essay on Equality.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE NEW INTUITION

Sometimes, in the history of the race, a new intuition appears. When this happens, it puts to flight the wrangling of generations. Power to create such an intuition is the final test of any theory; to prepare for it is well worth the strife of ages: once created, it conquers; but its formation is out of the ken and range of conscious human effort. With opinions or reasoning it has nothing to do; it underlies all reasoning, and is the evidence that an opinion has sunk below discussion into being.

Such was that instinct for religious toleration now almost universal. It took centuries to evolve. It had many and excellent arguments as well as brute force marshaled against its pleading. It fought, endured, was routed, replied, — but won its final victory in subconscious regions, till men slowly woke to recognize that the controverted principle had become a master-impulse, before which discussion was of no avail. It had entered life, it had shaped new types of character; and when this happens, the victory of a principle is assured.

Assumptions are premature; yet it would surely seem that the same process is going on to-day in another province. The belief that all the mani

fold gifts of life should be equally open to all living was not even a theory two hundred years ago. In the Athenian democracy, the bondage of many slaves made possible the exquisite freedom of the citizen. In Christian ages, no pure democracy has existed. But let us never forget that just behind the nineteenth century lies a new social ideal, mighty, destructive, creative. The remembered is the immortal. Once trusted to race-memory, that most subtle and compelling force, an idea can bide its time. The poets might suddenly abandon their fervors for liberty; the Church might extend sedate hands of benediction over the children of the established fact; a travesty of freedom, based on the prosperity of the bourgeois and the extension of the ballot, might speciously conceal the real control of that grim task-master, competition. Yet not all the apathy and delusion bemoaned by our social prophets could wholly or forever befog the radiant vision of a spiritual democracy. Ideals, when ignored, have a way of turning to threats. From all the noblest and deepest thinkers of the age, we have heard the solemn and insistent note of social warning; modern events also, as they proceeded, offered many sinister hints of danger. Manchester insurrections, bread-riots, Chartism, Trades-unionism in its early violence and later efficiency, strikes, lockouts, all the phases and episodes of industrial struggle, have had plenty to say to those who would hear. Yet not by such means may we mark the true advance of the social ideal, nor predict its destiny, but rather by a secret and inward

change wrought in the souls of men. "The meek shall inherit the earth" was a word spoken nineteen hundred years ago, and forgotten during centuries, while people insisted that it was quite enough for the meek to cherish the hope of inheriting the heavens. When democracy was born, the old word was reasserted, with a note of renewed resolution in its prophecy. Since then it has been discussed, ridiculed, analyzed, denied, defended, — and unrealized; nor can we say that its cause is as yet intellectually either lost or won. Meanwhile, the demand that the earth-heritage be thrown open on equal terms to all men has been sinking deep into the hearts of quiet people, till here and there, to him who has the gift to see secret things and hidden forces, appears something more striking than battalioned arguments, or workmen: a man or woman to whom this demand has become no longer a theory to be pressed, but an intuition to be followed. Conviction has become faith, and faith, in the end, achieves all things. Even to the mountain of social prejudice and class-interest it may say: "Be thou removed, and cast into the sea of oblivion." When once a theory has changed into a regulating instinct, feeling its way toward conduct, the day of its victory is at hand. The quiet assumptions of the simple are thus the record of the intellectual conflicts of the strong.

In an age marked by a deliberate assertion that no man is his brother's keeper, and that "laissez faire" is the right continuance of natural law, was heard the "Ave" of a great Annunciation.

Nor can the message be silenced by statements that it has never been heard nor received before. To say that the many have always labored that the few might enjoy, that no civilization has ever been able to subsist without class-distinctions, that the poor have always suffered and lived and died ignored, is only to say that never before has the angel of brotherhood visited society with his holy message of freedom. Would we learn the power of his message, we must not turn to the great world of action and thought, but to the quiet hearts that keep it and ponder. Deeper than all theories, apart from all discussion, the mighty instinct for social justice shaped the hearts that were ready to receive it. The personal types thus created are the certain harbingers of the victory of the cause of freedom. The heralds of freedom, they are also its martyrs. The delicate vibrations of their consciousness thrill through the larger social self which more stolid people still ignore, and the pain of the world is their own. Not for one instant can they know an undimmed joy in art, in thought, in nature, while part of their very life throbs in the hunger of the multitudes of the dispossessed. All this by no virtue, no choice of their own. So were they born: the children of the new age, whom the new intuition governs. In days when the misery of the poor and the false conditions of the working-classes press nearer than ever before to the thought of the most indifferent, these more sensitive souls must suffer, — suffer with a purely inward torture, which only in rare moments can they believe to hold in itself some

expiatory grace. Some of them are held by inexorable circumstance to their places in the mechanical routine of life: aware, and helplessly aware, as they eat and dress and sleep under fair shelter, and share in the higher pleasures and ambitions of culture, that those laboring people who have produced all these good things, or our freedom to enjoy them, are themselves shut away from luxuries, physical or mental, in the stagnation of ignorance or fatigue. Others, more fortunate, go forth silently and unobtrusively to cast in their lot with the unprivileged. By personal renunciation of luxury and of the goods of commercialism, by sharing their best material possessions, and their best selves too, they seek to escape so far as may be the taint of sin. Few, these children of the new age are increasing in number. In every country, out of every class they gather: men and women vowed to simplicity of life and to social service; possessed by a force mightier than themselves, over which they have no control; aware of the lack of social harmony in our civilization, restless with pain, perplexity, distress, yet filled with deep inward peace as they obey the imperative claim of a widened consciousness. By active ministry, and yet more by prayer and fast and vigil, they seek to prepare the way for the spiritual democracy on which their souls are set.

## CHAPTER VI

### GEORGE ELIOT AND THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

THESE souls of the new order George Eliot was first among English novelists to recognize and describe. Probably this is because she was herself one of them. Her books express the restless and inquiring mood of the central Victorian period. It is no longer enough to picture life, as do the earlier novelists: with George Eliot, we seek to wrest from life its hidden secrets. Her attitude is that of the thinking people of her time: deeply agitated by ethical problems, trying earnestly to adjust itself to widening horizons and to contracting skies.

The interests that controlled English thought between 1830 and 1870 were chiefly religious; and the most obvious fact about George Eliot's novels is their spiritual appeal. To run over the tables of contents in the leading magazines during these years, and compute proportion of subjects, would convince any one that religious speculation dominated all other questions in the mind of the reading public. From the beginning of the period, a yearning for the religious temper met a profound discontent with religious formulæ. The most life-communicating men of the day, John Stuart Mill, Cardinal

Newman, Spencer, Harrison, Maurice, were all in one way or another of the religious type. The iconoclastic instinct, in matters spiritual, had ceased to give pleasure, and almost every leader of skeptical thought was in his own way making efforts toward construction. A fresh and mighty synthetic principle was introduced into the thought-world as years went on by the scientific theory formulated by the followers of Darwin; and as soon as it appeared and made its significance felt, earnest minds took up the attempt to correlate the religious instinct with evolutionary ethics. Of all the people engaged in this endeavor, George Eliot was the most vividly human. Every one of her books bears witness to the painstaking ardor of her attempts at readjustment, the sincerity of spirit with which she sought to replace the sanctions for high morality once found in dogma by new sanctions, equally stringent, found in natural law.

To transform morals and art by the infusion of evolutionary ideas — to find in the revelation of the forces that had shaped the visible universe a substitute for the old revelation from the Invisible on which humanity had been used to lean — might seem quest absorbing enough for one generation. But progress was breathlessly rapid during that half-century; nor can we fully account for the genesis of George Eliot's books without a new factor. Her work is as important in its social as in its religious aspect. It is profoundly significant as marking the transition between a period preoccupied with relations of life and evolution to that

next period, in which we still live, quite as intensely absorbed with the relations of life and democracy. The first order of problems was her chief conscious interest, as it was that of the circle in which she moved; to the second, her books bear witness all the stronger because largely unconscious.

No one, reading her, can fail to see the close connection by which the one order of thought led into the other. The tremendous contribution made by evolutionary ethics to the social ideal can hardly be overrated. George Eliot, first of imaginative writers, was alive to the solemn and formative power of heredity and environment, and their shaping force in the determination of duty. From "Romola" to "The Spanish Gypsy" and "Daniel Deronda," her plots are constructed almost wholly to show how all personal passions and desires, however laudable, should yield if they come in contact with the great principles which carry the race onward toward expanding life. Study of these inexorable principles quickens in thought a new sense of the organic relation of each atom to the social whole. George Eliot's finer characters recognize with wonder or feel with constraining force the relation of the individual experience to that human past from which it sprang, that present which surrounds it, that future which it must help to create. Their intense social consciousness is possible only to an age which had outlived revolution in history, and was facing evolution in thought. Evolutionary ethics directly led the way to an enlarged recognition of social responsibility. This

recognition was, as we have seen, entirely lacking in society as pictured by Dickens and Thackeray: George Eliot is the first novelist to show us a society in which it is at work.

Even apart from this great achievement, the social value of her books is high. With her two brilliant predecessors, she completes the social survey of the Victorian novel. She was bred in the country, close in heart and origin to the agricultural life of England; and her early books, "Adam Bede," "Silas Marner," and "The Mill on the Floss," reflect this life, in all its quaint and leisurely charm. An England uninvaded by competition or spiritual unrest, where telegrams are unknown and the railroad is a distant rumor, — an England unchanged in essentials from the time of Shakespeare, — smiles on us from these fair and serene pages. All this attractive life belongs to the past. To-day, Dolly Winthrop can hardly keep the quaint *naïveté* of her theology, nor can it be easy even in quiet corners to find Mrs. Poyser superintending the butter, or Mrs. Tulliver weeping over the family linen. But George Eliot gave us a real gift in these kindly pictures of the England of her girlhood, showing the honesty and simplicity, the strong uprightness, the tranquil intelligence independent of book-learning, that lingered in the rural population before the word or thing "Proletariat" was thought of.

These early books are the most winning that George Eliot ever wrote. Perhaps this is because the best art has a way of springing from the heart

of childish memories; perhaps because her subjects have great intrinsic beauty. To invest the lives of the ignorant and simple with pathos, dignity, and charm was almost a new departure for fiction when she began to create. Nothing more clearly evidences the strength of the impulse which sends our sophisticated world back to nature, than the growth since her day of the attraction which drew her. Under the guidance of Hardy, of Verga, of Tolstoi, we are coming to feel that the noblest art, because the most sincere, is that which reveals the free movement of elemental human passions in the large simplicity of the lives of the poor. George Eliot's early books take their place in a great literary group, strongly expressive of one phase in the most modern social feeling.

But her later looks, if they probe less deep into primal instincts, have a more direct bearing on the problems that perplex us, and therefore a keener interest for the artificial creatures that we have become. She turned from those delightful pastorals where the idyllic, the grotesque, and the profoundly human blend in so tranquil a harmony; she described the stirrings of discontent, the seething of new forces, in the England of the central Victorian period. After "Silas Marner," her books reflect the interests of the eager intellectual circle into which, as a mature woman, she entered in London. Thackeray and Dickens had showed us the life of the average, the majority, — of Poverty and Fashion, equally unintellectual. George Eliot, a few years later, showed the life, the mood, the

questions, of the small minority of thinking people.

Never, surely, were books more wistful than those great novels, "Romola," "Middlemarch," "Daniel Deronda." Their animus is wholly new: it is neither scorn nor laughter; it is sympathy. This sympathy, more than any other quality, gives to the work of George Eliot a depth of thoughtfulness unsounded by the shallow criticism on life of her predecessors.

In social significance, "Middlemarch" is probably the most important novel of the central Victorian period. It is certainly the most comprehensive. The social environment of the book, sketched with remarkable breadth and power, is really a summary of that which we have learned to know in essay and novel. Here is the gentry, — a country gentry, this time, — Mr. Brooke and the Chethams, with their mild dilettanteism, their lack of purpose or ideals. Here is the bourgeois society of the town, divided from the county by a seemingly impassable gulf: the Bulstrodes and Vincys, painfully devoid of sweetness and light. In the intrigue centring around old Featherstone, George Eliot has tried her hand at types that the offhand melodrama of Dickens would have treated more successfully. But Arnold himself never drew a better Philistine than Bulstrode, with his "double Hell, of not making money and not saving his soul," nor is any one of Thackeray's women more selfish, bewitching, and trivially clever than Rosamund. George Eliot's studies of clergy are in all her books

a new feature, unparalleled in fiction unless we return to the capital work of Miss Austen. "Middlemarch" gives none of her favorite and sympathetic pictures of dissent; but the Established Church is represented by admirable if rather depressing types, in Mr. Cadwallader, Mr. Farebrother, and Mr. Casaubon. Certainly, wherever the force for social salvation may reside, it is not in these gentlemen.

All these minor characters, whom Thackeray would have treated with contempt and Dickens with jest, George Eliot touches with unfailing pathos and redeems to human dignity; yet her obvious intention is to furnish through them a typical social background. Against this conventional society, she places in clear, warm relief two figures: Lydgate, the representative of intellectual force; Dorothea, the representative of moral force. Both rebel against convention, both in their different ways are routed by the world.

In Dorothea, that sweet and bewildered person, a new type of heroine appears upon the stage. Dickens' liking went out to fragile, emotional, and kittenish young ladies. In Louisa Bounderby of "Hard Times," we may perhaps catch, as she visits Stephen Blackpool, her husband's "hand," a hint of a wider compassion; but the hint is of the faintest. Thackeray, in Ethel Newcome, showed a restless, spirited, brilliant creature, ill at ease in the only life open to her. But Dorothea is run in another mould from these. That curious sense of the organic whole, that modern craving for untrammeled fellowship, for which the term altruism is

degrading and no other term exists, gathers intensely in her person, and is the source of the warm glow that streams through the dreary book. Dorothea is the first example noted in English fiction of that new personal type which suffers with atoning pain for the sorrows of the world. Her life fails. Wholly unguided, differing from the modern woman by her lack of any adequate training, or indeed of any training at all, she finds no cause for which to live, and had she found one, is too solely a creature of noble instincts to serve it effectively. Her marriage with Ladislaw can hardly be held more reassuring than that with Casaubon: for the brilliant young Bohemian — "a sort of a Shelley, you know," says Mr. Brooke — surely illustrates the frivolity of the forces of revolt, as conceived by George Eliot, against the solid background of English respectability, the Cadwalladers and Chethams and Bulstrodes and Brookes. Poor Dorothea! Her power has not yet changed from impulse to purpose. She represents only the second stage in the evolution of the modern heroine as a social force. The first is shown in the domestic and soft-hearted ladies of Thackeray and Dickens; the last, so far, appears in such characters as Besant's Valentine and Mrs. Ward's Marcella, — women strong to achieve in their activities and influence that large coöperation with the forces making for righteousness which earlier heroines never imagined nor desired, and which Dorothea only dreamed.

How George Eliot herself construed the significance of her Dorothea is evident from the Prelude

to "Middlemarch." She reminds us in a lovely passage of the great life of St. Theresa, and continues: "That Spanish woman who lived three hundred years ago was certainly not the last of her kind. Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action: perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet, and sank unwept into oblivion. With dim lights and tangled circumstance, they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggle seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness: for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul."

"Middlemarch," to the author, was doubtless the epos of failure. It expressed her impassioned protest against modern society, with its lack of a "coherent social faith and order," its mammonism and dilettanteism, its conventional class-divisions, its utter inability to present to young, large, eager natures a cause to live and die for, an atmosphere in which they could expand. But to us, the book, with all its sadness, is full of hope. It marks the turn of the tide in modern fiction; for it shows characters in whom a new social idealism is stirring, and their very failure implies the promise of social salvation.

Once again, George Eliot wrote with infinite pains a large book of social studies. If "Middlemarch" is the novel of failure, "Daniel Deronda" was meant to be the novel of triumph. No character in "Middlemarch" escapes the invisible walls of the modern prison: "Daniel Deronda" opens for its hero a way to freedom, to achievement, to the self-surrender which is rapture and success.

We have already seen how hard put to it is the nineteenth century when a hero for its romances is required. It is of no use, as even great Sir Walter reveals, to import imitations from the past: they may swagger and fight and love and perform unlikely feats to any extent, — they will be only ghosts after all. For the real hero must not be a survival nor an accident; he must be formed, evolved, created, by the special conditions of his own age. The militant hero is an anomaly and an absurdity in a novel that draws its background from a peaceful commercial civilization. We want a hero who shall reveal exalted possibilities of action and devotion in the ordinary circumstances that surround the average man.

Now when the writers of fiction had been reduced to such straits that the "gorilla type" of Jane Eyre's Rochester became popular, things were really at a sad pass. Neither Bulwer nor Trollope nor Reade nor Wilkie Collins evolved nor discovered a hero. They made some faint experiments on bolder lines than those attempted by Dickens or Thackeray, but as a rule they vibrated, like their betters, between the hysterical and the insipid, and

it is impossible even to recall the names of the young gentlemen who fill their leading rôles. The dearth of heroes by 1870 seemed hopeless.

"Daniel Deronda" was then a work of great audacity. For it was deliberately planned to present a new heroic type. Deronda is no reminiscence nor survival: he is a hero who could never have existed till our own day.

Many people have thought him a failure. He has been called shadowy, impossible, — worse still, priggish. And it is true that Derondas do not stand in wait for us at every street-corner, true also that the average man, if he meets them in real life, as he is more likely to do now than he was when the book was written, is pretty sure to resent them there as much as he does in fiction. Yet Deronda is not faultless; the modern mania of hesitation, which threatens at one time to control him, is no trait of an ideal character. But whether the drawing be executed well or ill, the conception of the character was as original as it was significant. Deronda's consciousness sends out its sensitive fibres through the whole human race, and realizes the mighty organism from within. The impulse to compassion and to service, helplessly astir in Dorothea, is in him both dominant and enlightened. The drama of the book consists in its gradual victory over every ordinary ambition and claim. For Deronda cannot spend his life in vague accidental usefulness, a sentimental philanthropist at large. He craves a duty; but he has a strong dislike to inventing one. He can work freely and powerfully

only where he belongs. At last a summons comes, and from the most unexpected quarter. The reputed son of an English baronet discovers that he is a Jew, and his people claim him. Daniel's decision is not doubtful. Fellowship with the British aristocracy, a career in Parliament, marriage with the fascinating Gwendolen, are open to him; from these he turns away, to ally himself with a race vulgar and despised. We leave him fearing that he is embarked in a hopeless cause, — the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, — but confident that he has found the emancipation which brings life, in the service of an ideal such as a commercial civilization sighed for in vain.

What drew George Eliot to the strange plot of this book? Partly, no doubt, her Hebrew sympathies: the appeal of the most wonderful racial romance ever known by the world. Largely also the opportunity offered by the situation for study of the interplay of two great natural forces, heredity and environment. These mighty forces, which so profoundly impressed her imagination, unite in most of her books to determine duty. Here they pull different ways; the resultant struggle is intensely dramatic, and heredity, the stronger, conquers. But it is impossible to account for Deronda entirely on lines of either romantic or scientific inspiration. The novel was George Eliot's last, and it appeared in 1876. By that time, social unrest was fervently at work, though it did not yet fully understand its own nature. Karl Marx was in London: only brief years were to pass before

"The International" should be re-formed. A new conception, startling as that of evolution, was in the air, and demanded new readjustments. It was the conception of social democracy.

George Eliot's formulæ were those of the scientific era just closing, not those of the democratic era just at hand. But her spirit faced the future. "Daniel Deronda" reveals the sharp class cleavage breaking down under the influence of a great impulse, and the passivity of life is at an end. The book is tentative, transitional, inadequate; it marks the very beginning of a new spirit. Ten years earlier, Deronda could not have been conceived: he is no contemporary of Pendennis. Ten years later, one may be allowed to question whether he would have found his release from conventionality through a side-issue. He discovers that he is a Jew, and sacrifices all the world holds dear to identify himself with his race. Well and good! Yet the Hebrew is only one detail in the problem of the modern democracy. Had the book been written in 1886, we may easily imagine Deronda finding his cause in devotion to a wider social freedom, and espousing the side of the proletariat. A far weaker genius than George Eliot conceived not many years later a similar situation. The hero of Besant's "Children of Gibeon" is placed exactly like Deronda, pulled one way by the refined surroundings into which he has been adopted, another by the ties of blood. But his mother is a washerwoman, and it is to the working-people that he returns. The feeble democratic instincts of earlier novelists found

vent, half-frightened at their own temerity, in pitting an artistic Bohemia, full of culture and genius, if a little undisciplined in manner, against the forces of Respectability and Philistia. A little of the same spirit lingers in "Daniel Deronda."

Yet, with whatever limitations, it is a noble book, and its incidental suggestion is fearlessly democratic. The greasy streets, the little back shop of the Cohens, the kindly, vulgar people whom the fastidious hero preferred to the residence and society of Sir Hugo Mallinger, are admirably drawn. They are among the first truthful studies of city poverty, and are worth in their way all Dickens' lyrical or dramatic exaggerations. Best of all, the spirit of the hero of the future is in this grave and ardent young patriot, though the form which his enthusiasm assumes be a side-issue in the modern struggle.

George Eliot's works mark the climax of the social feeling in fiction previous to 1880. They show the social conscience fairly awake, and awaiting its summons. Other modern novels, during the same period, reflected clearly enough the growing spirit. To discuss the work of every author lies without our scope, but it is impossible to avoid signaling the notable names of Meredith and Hardy. Each is, like Browning, a distinct individualist in thought and artistic method; yet both manifest the new spirit by the marvelous keenness with which their chosen social types are made to live before us in their relations to the larger life of the race.

If the student of the future wishes to understand the very innermost springs of conduct and passion in the British aristocracy as watched, not by the satirist, but by the psychologist, he will do well to turn rather to "Beauchamp's Career" than to "Vanity Fair." If, in the approaching day when society shall have become mobilized in every particle, he is curious to learn the characteristics of a population rooted for centuries to the soil, he will find his richest material in "Far from the Madding Crowd," "The Woodlanders," and "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." Meredith and Hardy practice realism at the two poles of sophistication and simplicity. No words can do more than justice to Meredith's splendid power to catch the flying detail of thought and feeling in the highly allusive and subtle life of the upper classes; or to Hardy's magnificent comprehension of the silent forces of custom and passion in the lives of the unlettered poor. Meredith would be a great social novelist, in even the narrowest sense, had he given us nothing but the story of Nevil Beauchamp, with its brilliantly contrasted types of the "twelfth century baron" and the radical old Carlylesque doctor, and its Shelley-like young hero, living out between them the exasperating pathos of his "career." Many side-suggestions in "Tess" and "Jude the Obscure" show that the mind of Hardy is brooding intently on modern conditions wider than those he chooses for central theme. At the same time, taking the work of these authors in its entirety, we cannot fairly claim that its main inspiration is in

the modern social spirit. Both are preoccupied, in an age full of anomalies, not with problems of race or class, but with those of the private life. Both decline in their later books — if so strong a development may be called a decline — toward the distinct tendency-novel; constituting themselves in different ways the champions of women, they lose sight of the larger issues which include the less, and which in their very sweep and breadth offer a certain protection to the man of genius against offensive and inartistic dogmatism.

Now we must be content with a few brief hints and mentions in the way of summary. Despite the vast number of novels which have no social animus whatever, the student of social ethics and conditions can gather from early Victorian fiction a surprising array of suggestive books. The political novel, through the bombast of Lytton, and the extraordinary farrago of nonsense, shot with flashes of keen perception, in Disraeli's "Coningsby" and "Sybil," carried the half-contemptuous understanding that liberalism as "laissez faire" was dying, and that new lines of division based on social considerations were imminent. In Charles Reade, the purely literary instinct of the craftsman seized on the material offered by industrial conditions, and used them in vivid if somewhat mechanical fashion. The ethical novel of social revolt had more importance. The studies of factory life and of the position of workmen and employers in the stories of Mrs. Gaskell and in Charlotte Brontë's "Shirley" were noteworthy for their fair-mindedness and true

feeling, and are old-fashioned to-day in art, perhaps, but not in theme. The quiet and beautiful early work of Macdonald, especially "Robert Falconer," reminds us of the debt which the cause of the People has owed to Scottish literature from the days of Burns to those of Barrie and Maclaren: for it upheld, out of the simplicity of Scottish life, the spiritual idea of freedom and social service. But perhaps the most agitated expression of social unrest which the fiction of the times furnishes is found in the "Yeast" and "Alton Locke" of Charles Kingsley. The last of these books it is still impossible to read without excitement. It belongs to the distant days of 1848, when the Chartist movement had for the first time brought men of culture and Christianity into direct contact with the industrial problem and with real workingmen. Its grim picture of the sweating-system and its indignant eloquence are living yet; its demonstration of the utter helplessness of the untrained workingmen, victims of a wistful, well-meaning, but wholly inadequate gentry, has lost little of its ironical force. But a visionary element and a scant knowledge of the working-class it meant to represent vitiate the book. When, at the end, Kingsley, as in duty bound, turns to suggest solution and salvation, he slips into an apocalyptic strain. Through his sentimentality, the only definite thought to emerge is that the key to all social troubles is to be found in Christianity. But how? This vast and intricate question, the most pressing that confronts the modern Church, he does not even face.

So far as artistic excellence goes, the book would have been better if less ardently conceived. Reformer and artist coexisted in Kingsley, each so vigorous as never to allow to the other full development.

Taken as a whole, fiction from 1840 to 1880 testified to the quickening of interest in social types; to the gradual awakening of social unrest; to a vague and helpless quest of a wider freedom, an instinct new and as yet baffled, hopeful only because of its own intensity. Society was still between sleep and waking; but its sleep was troubled with dreams, and the dreams of dawn are prophetic.

## CHAPTER VII

### A GLIMPSE OF AMERICA

On the other side of the Atlantic, from 1840 to 1880, a social literature far more cheerful and assured was in progress. Here the democratic ideal, never yet frankly accepted in the European nations, was the native intuition of every growing youth. Its difficulties were not yet unfolded; it was seen actually at work, imparting to our young civilization an elasticity such as Christendom had never experienced; a visible symbol of its seemingly inexhaustible promise was outspread in the wide lands of the West. The writings of Lowell, of Whittier, of Thoreau, of Emerson, of Whitman, are alight with hope and aglow with optimism. "The American Scholar," "The Biglow Papers," "The Song of the Open Road," are the eager lyrical expressions of a democracy only just conscious enough of obstacle to gain the splendid thrill of combat. A feeling of power, expectant, exultant, leapt through the new nation. No weight of custom bowed its children down: it was aware that it was established on foundations unknown in the old world; the earth was its own, and it waited, ardent, for the sons of the future.

"Perhaps the time has already come," said

Emerson in his ringing address on "The American Scholar," "when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. . . . I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art or Provençal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low."

"Democracy! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating itself and joyfully singing." This Address, with its great proclamation of an ideal and spiritual freedom, strikes the keynote of feeling in the young nation. Echoes, conscious or unconscious, came to it from all sides, till they passed into laughter-compelling bravado in the extraordinary yet clarion songs of Whitman: —

"Come Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia,
Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy, of Achilles' wrath, and Æneas', Odysseus' wanderings,
Placard 'Removed' and 'To Let' on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus,
. . . . . .
For know, a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide untried domain, awaits, demands you." [1]

The whole body of our early American literature,

[1] *Song of the Exposition.*

despite a tentative and imitative quality which clings to much of it, assuredly suggests a society which has sloughed off an enormous weight of conventions, and has escaped from stratified rigidity into a reverent joy in the free movement of its every particle. Cooper beside Scott, choosing the pathless forest and the lithe pioneer rather than the mediæval court and tourney as material for romance; Whittier beside Burns, exhaling with calm and artless simplicity convictions which the peasant-poet of the Old World shouted with passionate defiance; Lowell beside Arnold, and, we might disregard chronology to add, Howells beside Dickens, — all these comparisons suggest a distinct American spirit, new-born in the New World.

In the amplitude, yet seemingly unbounded, of the new continent, social conditions were still extremely simple. "Plain living and high thinking," such as Clough delightedly describes in his American letters, were the general instinct and practice. "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone," said Thoreau. Perhaps the simplicity of life gained peculiar charm from a wistful prescience that it was passing away, and men like the Transcendentalists clung with resolute tenacity to their natural heritage. Society, at least in New England, had become sufficiently self-conscious to rejoice in its own freedom from sophistication. It shared the intellectual riches of Europe; it inherited the primitive practical conditions of the pioneer. Seldom indeed is such a union seen, and the Transcendental

movement witnessed to the resultant purity and vigor of the young civilization. Social idealism flourished in its atmosphere. Experiments like Brook Farm, whereof the Articles are still good to read, sprang up with naïf and winning audacity. Men of letters, as Hawthorne's whimsical Journal will show, for a time took honestly and energetically to manual labor; and though with some of them the reaction was not long in coming, for a little while the way really seemed open to the actual establishment on this workaday earth of the new "City of Friends."

James Russell Lowell gives a delightful picture of the conditions that prevailed through those fortunate years in one of the strong addresses of his later life, "The Independent in Politics," delivered before the Reform Club of New York in 1888: —

"Till within a few years of our Civil War, everything conduced to our measuring the success of our institutions by the evidence of our outward prosperity, and to our seeing the future in rose-color. The hues of our dawn had scarcely faded from the sky.

. . . . . .

"Many, perhaps most, of the refugees who, during or after the Revolutionary War, went to England, or home, as they fondly called it, found themselves out of place and unhappy there. The home they missed was that humane equality, not of condition or station, but of being and opportunity, which by some benign influence of the place had

overcome them here, like a summer cloud, without their special wonder. Yet they felt the comfort of it as of an air wholesome to breathe. I more than suspect that it was the absence of this inestimable property of the moral atmosphere that made them aliens in every other land, and convinced them that an American can no more find another country than a second mother. This equality had not then been proclaimed as a right; it had been incorporated in no constitution, but was there by the necessity of the case — a gift of the sky and of the forest. . . .

"This was the American novelty, no bantling of theory, no fruit of forethought, no trophy of insurgent violence, but a pure evolution from the nature of man in a perfectly free medium. The essential triumph was achieved in this tacit recognition of a certain privilege and adequacy in mere manhood, and democracy may be said to have succeeded before it was accepted as doctrine or embodied as a political fact. Our ancestors sought a new country. What they found was a new condition of mind."

In this "humane equality of being and opportunity," each several person seemed to stand out with a new light upon him. A serene individualism pervades all the utterances of what we may call our first American mood. "Another sign of our times," says Emerson in the conclusion of the essay already quoted, "is the new importance given to the single person. . . . Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit; — not to be reckoned one character; — not to yield that peculiar fruit which

each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south? Not so, brothers and friends, — please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. . . . A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."

"I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things,
It is not the earth, it is not America who is so great,
It is I who am great or to be great, it is You up there, or any one,
It is to walk rapidly through civilizations, governments, theories,
Through poems, pageants, shows, to form individuals."[1]

It is inevitable that the strong feeling of power imparted by the democratic ideal should thrill first through the individual brain and heart and arm: individualism is the first logical free expression of the spirit of democracy. The fine phrase of Napoleon, "La carrière ouverte aux talents," seemed to Lowell, as it still seems to many people, the last word of civilization. It is our glory that we have placed a spiritual as well as a material construction upon the phrase. Nor is this mystically exalted idea of the individual by any means consciously opposed to the idea of the social whole. Revolutionary idealism, from the days of Rousseau down, not only held the two thoughts in solution, but believed that each implied the other; that as

[1] Whitman, *By Blue Ontario's Shore.*

the welfare of the one man was shadow except as it could be shared by the many, so the many could never gain it until it was possessed by the one. Pushed to an extreme in a crowded land, however, this principle does not always lead to the advantage of the majority; and the honest individualist often confessed from the first that the strong man must rise to success over the bodies of his fellows, or at least that social laws have scant responsibility toward the weak. "Ungracious as it may sound," says Whitman in "Democratic Vistas," "Democracy looks with suspicious, ill-satisfied eye upon the very poor, the ignorant, and on those out of business. . . . She asks for men and women with occupations, well-off, owners of houses and acres and with cash in the bank." But during the first golden years of the republic, this so frank avowal was neither made, thought of, nor needed. The country was yet wide and unpeopled; each man might announce and achieve his intention of extending to his full stature, with no fear of jostling his neighbor.

The American idea of freedom was not stationary. Nobly dramatic phases marked its evolution. New England had been colonized by men who counted civilization well lost for spiritual liberty; and the tradition of their severe unworldliness remained long, as it should remain to-day, a vital inspiration. The revolutionary struggle had formed the image of the Nation, and added to the religious conception of freedom a political idea definite and

highly intellectualized. The religious and the political idea had alike carried with them a corollary clearly assumed though not stated. If the founders of the nation did not grasp in its entirety the modern thought of social democracy, — as indeed no man at their time could grasp it, — they at least expected that America should have no privileged class with a monopoly of luxuries, and that fair opportunity to enter the struggle of life on equal terms should be open to all citizens. A plutocracy was assuredly the last result of their hopes contemplated either by our Puritan forefathers, or by the great statesmen of the Revolution.

To all the splendid conditions of our early years — a fine tradition of unworldliness, a simple social life free from material preoccupations, personal types singularly pure and high — came the last and chief aid to idealism, a noble cause to fight for. The anti-slavery conflict, in that long history of which the Civil War is the climax, was the third great episode in the national struggle for freedom. It confronted men with a clear-cut issue. A dark subject race, avowedly deprived of even the simulacrum of liberty, stood visibly mocking in its bondage the ideal of the founders of the nation. To destroy slavery, and at the same time to assert and finally establish that national unity which had been somewhat hastily assumed, was the obvious task of the America of 1860. With such a cause to summon, with almost complete blindness to the complexity of the growing national life, with faith undimmed by disillusion and upheld by purest

religious fervor, fortunate indeed were the men of the North in that generation. They saw

"Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne."

No perception of a less simple antithesis bewildered them; and, confident that "that scaffold ruled the Future," they marched bravely up its steps with a song upon their lips. For Truth demanded martyrs: real soldier-martyrs, inspired by simple, obvious, glorious heroism, by that readiness to lay down the life of the body which forever makes the blood leap and renews the youth of the spirit of man. During the slow gathering and great outburst of the anti-slavery struggle, one feels pulsing through all the written words of our idealists the exultant sense of hope and power, the conviction that mighty and terrible though the task may be, intrusted by Freedom to America, the young nation shall prove itself worthy even unto death. Nor was their faith disappointed. It was the "plain people" of President Lincoln who fought the Civil War.

This ringing note of American optimism was slow to die from our literature. It echoes many years later in Lowell's fine essay on "Democracy," and its high conviction, its beautiful confidence in Freedom, its assurance of victory, sound courage to our more uncertain age. Well may we be thankful for that early struggle against obvious slavery: we, children of a new world already old, immersed in questions agonizing from their confusion, facing the most intricate problems of race and class, with no means to solve them except an idea pitilessly and sublimely simple.

For the social situation developed as the anti-slavery conflict receded. Peace was not yet to be the inheritance of a land protagonist among the nations in the frank assertion of a new ideal. To achieve Democracy was no light task that a hundred years and two great wars could finish. New difficulties unfolded: the struggle for freedom was seen to involve wider and more complex issues than our first Americans had dreamed.

We started with implicit trust in American institutions and the American spirit; we trust them still. Yet we see that if a great work lies behind us, a greater lies before. Much of that prosperity and fine simplicity in social conditions which we liked to ascribe to our voluntary shaping of an ideal for our national life, time is revealing as an accident of primitive development and of ample space. Nor should we be surprised. Our political institutions are our own, our social ideal is our own: but what is there distinctively American in our industrial institutions as such? As the accidents of a new country vanish, these conditions become more and more assimilated to those of Europe. To find industrial workers living under idyllic and rational circumstances such as those described by Lucy Larcom in her charming account of "A New England Girlhood," it is necessary to move farther and ever farther west, if we would — to borrow Matthew Arnold's figure — "outrun the constable." Even from the wide regions of the West rises a voice of complaint and distress. Disraeli's "two nations" are among us, though passage

from side to side is easier than in Europe, and the nations change with each generation, instead of remaining constant from father to son. The significant absence, which long prevailed, of a literature of protest in America corresponding to that of Europe is now invaded by sharp notes of pain: —

"Yea, what avail the endless tale
Of gain by cunning and plus by sale?
Look up the land, look down the land,
The poor, the poor, the poor, they stand
Wedged by the pressing of Trade's hand
Against an inward-opening door,
That pressure tightens evermore.
They sigh a monstrous, foul-air sigh
For the outside leagues of liberty,
Where Art, sweet lark, translates the sky
Into a heavenly melody.
'Each day, all day (these poor folks say),
In the same old year-long, drear-long way,
We weave in the mills and heave in the kilns,
We sieve mine-meshes under the hills,
And thieve much gold from the devil's bank-tills,
To relieve, O God, what manner of ills?
But who said once in the lordly tone,
*Man shall not live by bread alone,*
*But by all that cometh from the Throne?*
Hath God said so?
But Trade saith No,
And the kilns and the curt-tongued mills say, '*Go:*
*There's plenty that can if you can't, we know;*
*Move out, if you think you're underpaid.*
*The poor are prolific; we're not afraid:*
*Trade is trade.*'"[1]

Hurtling claims confront us on every hand. The political aspect of democracy is developing problems of its own. The care of weakling nations at our doors bids fair to be thrust upon

[1] Sidney Lanier, *The Symphony.*

us whether we will or no, and even before we have reached full self-realization we are drawn almost against our will into the politics of the world. Meanwhile, we are bewildered, almost overwhelmed, by the outpouring of Europe on our coasts. It would seem that no nation, even if separated from the rest of the civilized world by wide ocean-reaches, could be allowed to carry on the struggle for freedom, or to win her gifts, alone. America had from the first proudly claimed the noble title she bears in Emma Lazarus' sonnet on the Bartholdi Statue of Liberty: —

> "Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
> With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
> Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
> A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
> Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name,
> 'Mother of Exiles.' From her beacon-hand
> Glows world-wide welcome. Her mild eyes command
> The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
> 'Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!' cries she
> With silent lips. 'Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming store.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me;
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door!'"

Only too readily the countries of Europe heard this invitation and obeyed it; and not all our wealth of territory and resource were adequate to meet the demands made on us by the throngs of helpless strangers yearly landed from the Old World. The crowds have increased, the industrial conditions of England have repeated themselves; and our sturdy individualism itself, with even less protest than that heard on the other side of the Atlantic, has sanctioned the free play of competi-

tive forces. With the American Constitution for an ideal, and for material wherefrom to realize it, Poles, Russians, Jews, Italians, Germans, Hungarians, Bohemians, Armenians, Irish; with an industrial situation rapidly becoming the same as that of Europe; with a political democracy in which it is at present not wholly easy to exult, America has fallen into line with the other nations, and must bear with them, but under conditions more complicated, the onus of the modern struggle.

That she will bear it, that she may lead it if she will, who, loving her, can doubt? If the work awaiting us is greater than the work achieved, we have great strength with which to meet it. If our conditions are in some respects even more complex than those of Europe, we have an immense advantage over her in the different foundations on which our national life is laid; in our assumption of social equality, and in the absence among us of solidified class feeling, such as removes all possibility of unconsciousness from social advance in the Old World. Ours not to create a tradition of freedom; ours only to maintain and apply a tradition, the chief glory of our inheritance. The Spirit of the American people — an invisible Presence such as Cardinal Newman loved to picture presiding over the destiny of nations — bends over us and beckons us on.

To realize a spiritual democracy for the victims and outcasts of the Old World is a task before which we may indeed quail, unless we believe it to be God-given. But, turning back to the lives of our fathers, surely we see in the warfare against

the slavery of the negro a prophecy of our larger conflict against evil less evident, but more deeply imbedded in the social body. The Civil War lies behind us as a great symbol, and its limited and clear-cut struggle may well inspire our generation as we face the more confused and widespread forces of industrial bondage that hold our laboring-classes in a spiritual deprivation as complete in some ways as that of the slave. Indeed, the same relation binds our present to all the episodes of our great history, even to that most recent episode which lies too close behind us for discussion. Noble and of vast import they have been ; yet we begin to question whether they were not all alike the preludes to a vaster conflict for which the forces are slowly gathering: the conflict against industrial slavery, the class-war that threatens the civilized world. We need all the courage the past can give us; we need all the consecration it can inspire. Well is it for us if the idealism of our first poets of freedom can still tingle on our lips, and the assurance of their faith cheer us. Well also if those soldier-martyrs who visibly laid down their lives for freedom can beckon and nerve those modern martyrs of the spirit, whom no physical excitement helps to sustain through that long agony in which their hearts hold up to God the victims of the modern slavery of trade. If our earlier struggles have bequeathed to us purpose, strength, and hope for that impending test of our idealism, then the splendid cheer, the tenacity and simplicity of faith, in our early American literature need not be lost.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHAT TO DO: ACCORDING TO CARLYLE

Refreshing battle against obvious wrong was not for England. There already, when our Civil War broke out, the less evident if more terrible form of slavery prevailed. Over-population, unemployment, starvation wages, were its symptoms; in strikes and riots it was finding tongue.

The modern situation was too complex to be readily discerned; during the half-century before 1880, it was invading the imagination indeed, but silently, slowly. Nor could it when discerned satisfy, though it could arouse, the ardent instinct for battle. For against what foes could the love of man and freedom hurl its weapons? The competitive system, dimly felt by some people to be at the basis of the evil, was as irresponsible as it was mighty. From one point of view, moreover, it was the very safeguard of personal liberty. Laissez Faire, in economic phenomena, corresponded accurately, if rather grimly, to Emerson's poetic theories of the right of every man to shape the universe according to his powers. Unrestricted competition seemed not only sternly just, according to the ideas current, but inevitable as a law of nature. Society, possessed by fresh and often

crude perception of evolutionary principles, felt helpless before it; for it did but carry out impersonally, inexorably, the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Even to-day, many people feel that it is either sentimental, criminal, or at best hopeless, to seek to disturb by conscious effort the action of so-called natural law in civilization.

And yet, while evolutionary thought thus brought with it a tendency to social fatalism, it brought also a quickened sense of social responsibility. Moreover, the imperative instinct of compassion, the intolerance for suffering engendered in a peaceful age, were on the increase; and the social conscience was becoming, in noble souls, quick as a nerve laid bare. No wonder that the growing recognition of the state of things carried with it a growing despair. The militant instinct, which longed to arise and fight for justice, piteously sought an object of attack, and fell back restless on an inward pain. The situation — have we yet escaped it? — was unsurpassed in history for dramatic power. Arthur Hugh Clough, one of the men most alive in his day to social paradox, vividly expressed, in his brilliant social poem, "The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich," the prevalent mood:

"Oh that the armies indeed were arrayed! Oh joy of the onset!
Sound, thou Trumpet of God, come forth, great Cause, and array us;
King and leader appear, thy soldiers sorrowing seek thee.
Would that the armies indeed were arrayed, oh where is the battle?
Neither battle I see, nor arraying, nor King in Israel,
Only infinite jumble and mess and dislocation,
Backed by a solemn appeal, 'For God's sake do not stir there!'"

In this twilight of uncertainty, what help is offered by our social guides? At best not very much. Despite interesting hints and experiments, the period from 1840 to 1880 was not in England socially constructive. It was better at diagnosis than at prescription. Conviction of sin must precede newness of life; and to convince a whole social order of disease might well take half a century, and more than one prophetic voice.

At the same time, constructive thought was of course not absent. From the days of Carlyle, all social critics sought for it: not one of them was contented simply to denounce. Their positive ideals were all more or less faint, contradictory, or fantastic; but they are deeply interesting to us still, partly because we have not outgrown them, partly because they prepared the way for the startling expansion of ethical and social theories witnessed by the last twenty years.

From 1830 on, active minds were moving eagerly along the two lines which we are still exploring. Granted modern civilization, what should be our attitude as individuals: what our concerted action? The suggestions for personal guidance and the counsels of personal duty are perhaps more interesting at first sight than the wider speculations, for theories change more swiftly than duties; and the social speculations of even twenty years ago may seem antiquated, while appeals to the private conscience are equally fresh, coming from the songs of the primitive Aryan or from last Sunday's sermon. We shall follow the quest of our authors

along this line first, taking them up one after the other, and then we shall turn to a general grouping of their social theories and ideals.

It is significant to find that the farther we recede in Victorian literature, the more tentative are the personal counsels offered. All the vehemence of Carlyle cannot offset his vagueness, when he ceases to denounce and attempts to guide. Earliest writer in whom the social conscience awakes, he has not yet seen the mists cleared away from the path of duty. Distracted appeals for action alternate with gibes at every practical line of conduct which ingenuity could suggest, in his bewildered and inconsistent pages. It were unfair to deny a certain positive value, perhaps still dynamic, to Carlyle's impassioned appeals. His constant emphasis on spiritual factors, his respect for work and protest against inertia, assuredly played their part in awakening an apathetic generation, and are potent in arousing apathy yet. "Produce, produce," cried he. "Were it but the pitifullest fragment of a worldkin, produce it in God's name!" But this plea held almost nothing specific. No one could expose quack medicines so mercilessly: when it came to prescribing, the case was altered. "If thou ask again, therefore, on the Morrison's pill hypothesis, What is to be done? allow me to reply: By thee, for the present, almost nothing. Thou there, the thing for thee to do, is, if possible, to cease to be a hollow sounding-shell of hearsays, egoisms, purblind dilettanteisms: and become, were it on the infinitely small scale, a faithful, discerning

soul." The advice was salutary, no doubt, but it hardly told the uncertain pilgrim which way to turn. This call to sincerity, the kindred call to labor, and the final command, Find your superior and obey him, pretty well sum up the personal gospel of Carlyle. "That I have been called by all the Newspapers a Free Man will avail me little if my pilgrimage have ended in death or wreck. Oh that the newspapers had called me slave, coward, fool, or what it pleased their sweet voices to call me, and I had attained not death but life. Liberty requires new definitions." [1]

Clearly as he saw the need of guidance, Carlyle no more told men where guidance was to be found, than he told them how to set at the work he enjoined. At times, he looked for the rulers of England in the British aristocracy. At times, he saw dimly that the commanding force of the age must come from within, not from without, the existing order, appealed to the Captains of Industry, and announced that the relation between master and man was the point of most dramatic interest in the modern world. But as time went on one nebulous idea after another faded, and this chapter is of necessity short. Carlyle's weakness in any but the most general lines of social suggestion betrays a period which was only beginning to realize its own moral needs; and the throngs of men who nevertheless crowded to his feet as disciples suggest the rarity of strong preaching, straight from heart to heart.

[1] *Past and Present*, book iii. ch. xiii. "Democracy."

## CHAPTER IX

### WHAT TO DO: ACCORDING TO RUSKIN

Ruskin was Carlyle's heir, but he was twenty-five years younger, and in his social thought the constructive factor is far more notable, positive, and sustained. Too positive it would seem, to the many who see in his ideas only Utopian vagaries, springing from the arrogance of a spoiled man of genius, and the over-ready assumptions of an untrained mind. Even Ruskin's best lovers cannot deny occasional truth to these strictures: yet they may be happy in feeling that as years pass by the strictures grow less and the appreciation grows greater. It is a curious fact that Ruskin's influence, at a complete discount a few years ago, is at present rising again into a force which must be reckoned with in England, and that even severe political economists may be found quoting his opinions with respect. Such vicissitudes in reputation hold in themselves a world of suggestion concerning the movement of the times.

Rightly to understand Ruskin's value, one must feel the exact scope of his thought. He was not a political economist, though he sometimes mistook himself for one. Nor was he on the other hand a mere dreamer. He discovered a new field, — the

field of distinctly social ethics. Far more clearly than Carlyle, he discerned that new conditions always demand the evolution of a new morality: and he pricked the lagging moral sense to keep up with the unfolding phenomena of a mercantile age.

For no forms of human activity can remain permanently unmoral, like the activities of nature. The very law of their being is that they should become more and more intensely moralized as they continue. This process is the inner secret of the advance of civilization. The family, for instance, was originally, even after it had emerged from conditions still more primitive, a purely natural institution: it became, and is yet becoming, increasingly subject to the refinements of the moral law. In like manner, the great world of relations which minister to the material life must have, at every point of its intricate working, a moral correlate. As the forms of such relations change, this correlate may become temporarily obscured: to bring it into the light, and make of it a controlling force, is the work of the changing generations. Trade, in its vast latter-day development, needs, then, as much as warfare a moral code; nor can that code, as is sometimes assumed, be practically the same.

This necessity was borne in on Ruskin's soul. He insisted sternly that the most automatic actions of our "business" life hold a moral factor and imply a moral ideal: and that the application of the Christian law to modern industrial society is a task which Christian folk cannot escape. He sought to suggest and unfold a great play of moral considera-

tions and duties, interwoven with the intricacies of industry, with production and consumption, with labor and commerce. In this attempt, Ruskin had practically no precursor of importance in England. It was natural that the full self-consciousness of a mercantile age should take some time to awake and to bring with it the sense of the subtle ramifications of duty. It was also natural that early efforts to moralize this vast region of activity should be tentative and fantastic, often fallacious and oftener misunderstood.

Ruskin's primary assertion was the chief cause of offense to the generation of 1860; to our own, it is perhaps his chief claim to respect. He dismissed as an unreal and unpleasant figment the so-called "economic man," and put in his place a man complete in all his faculties and desires, including his moral instincts, as the unit with which economic thought should reckon. He proclaimed that the production and happy maintenance of men was the final aim of any civilization. "It is open to serious question, which I leave to the reader's pondering, whether, among national manufactures, that of Souls of a good quality may not at last turn out a quite leadingly lucrative one?"[1] "There is no Wealth but Life; life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful

[1] *Unto This Last*, Essay II.

influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others." [1]

This great generalization was pregnant with radical thought. Following it out, Ruskin tried to apply some of its inferences in the two most important departments of industrial relations: production and consumption. And first he turned his mind to the ethics of production, as they bear on the two groups of people engaged in supplying what the world needs, — the workmen and the employers.

We have seen how the consciousness of the mighty, silent host of wage-earners had been quietly growing, in a civilization which had evolved them into a more distinct class than ever before, yet was inclined to ignore them, except as an economic convenience. Ruskin was first drawn to scrutinize this class, as we know, by discovering the stultification of the modern workman for artistic purposes. And so it was natural that the most important matter to study seemed to him the relation of occupation to manhood. True to his principle, "there is no wealth but life," he would consider first of all, in the regulation of industry, the reaction on the workman of his employment. Cheapness and rapidity of production are in his thought of entirely secondary importance, never to be aimed at until the reasonable welfare of the producer is secured. To meet the sweeping evils to which he thought our civilization subject, he proposed sweeping changes. In many trades, he would reject much of the machine work degrading

[1] *Unto This Last*, Essay IV.

to the workman, replacing it by those more primitive and human methods which might often, the art-critic incidentally points out, produce goods as well as souls better in quality. He recognizes and acknowledges that when the resources of "vital power" have been wisely used, much rough and uninteresting work will remain which can be done by machines far better than by men. In case of all work of this type, he would shorten the hours of labor that scope for life might be left; and he goes so far as whimsically to suggest that the menial work, degrading and deadening to the unprivileged, might be a salutary discipline to the privileged, and might offer a fine field of sacrifice and self-mortification, for instance, to sentimental young curates with a taste for asceticism. By permanent contracts he would put an end to the present instability of employment: and he would regulate wages, not by the pressure of competition, but by the establishment of a "just wage" correlated to a "just price," and determined by the unit of labor-time. He does not evade the question of Unemployment, which at this point leaps into his reader's mind: indeed, most of the manifold difficulties which these surprising suggestions imply, Ruskin faces clearly and discusses honestly, in a detail which of course cannot be reproduced here. His aim is in no sense the abolition of class-distinctions: it is simply the establishment of the laborer, under due mastership, in conditions of stable peace and adequate livelihood.

That these principles, however, are serenely sub-

versive of the present state of things, and that any employer who tried to practice them would swiftly be ruined, Ruskin is quite aware. To such considerations, especially the second, he quietly answers, Why not? Turning from the employed, he discusses the true social ethics for the other set of men engaged in production: the merchants and employers. Few passages in modern social criticism are more startling, more troubling, than the noble chapter in "Unto This Last"[1] in which Ruskin treats of these men and their duties. Why is it, he asks, that an atmosphere of heroism clings, in the common thought, about soldier, doctor, clergyman, men of varying professions, and around the merchant, none? Is it because this profession is less needful to the community? Americans may remember that, for an English audience, the force of the question is accented by the national dislike of trade: but it is not without force for us, too. Ruskin answers: the reason for the difference is that the merchant alone, among professional men, puts the gaining of money as his end above social service. An industrial civilization can only incidentally call for the heroism of the soldier; "occasions of death" grow rarer among us day by day. Yet a society which calls for no martyrdoms can never endure. Is it possible that we, like other civilizations which have preceded us, may find the opportunities for sacrifice arising from the peculiar conditions of our being, connecting themselves with those industrial relations which

[1] *Unto This Last*, ch. i. "The Roots of Honour."

have seemed so prosaically remote from the ideal? It may be so. Would the merchant exalt his profession? Let him find his "occasion of death." Where shall he find it? In refusing to sell poor goods, or to sacrifice the vital welfare of his workmen to his own prosperity. That he will often be ruined by this policy, Ruskin plainly perceives; but that there is any reason for an employer to escape ruin at the present crisis, any more than for an officer to aim at preserving his life in battle, or a doctor, in time of plague, he fails to see. "The captains of Industry," Carlyle had said, "are verily the leaders of the world." The captain holds himself ready to fall, if need be, by the way. Our modern captains may in time come to feel a new *noblesse oblige;* and a stern code of honor may forbid them to preserve their own financial standing at the expense of either the best service of the community or the welfare of their workmen. Thus moralized and exalted, the post of the employer, Ruskin tells us in flashing and winged words, may become the focus of heroism for the modern world.

So much for Ruskin's ethics of production, — startling enough still to an audience of to-day, appalling to the public of 1860. Yet after all, only a limited portion of the community are producers, and it is a little ungracious for those outside their ranks to dictate to them stringent laws of social sacrifice. But there is another aspect in which all men are involved in the present industrial distress, and responsible for it: we are all consumers.

What principles does Ruskin lay down for the consuming class, — that is, for society at large?

No one can say that he is any less severe — most people would add, less Utopian — here than in his former representations. For the very first principle which he announces with lyrical ardor of utterance is that during the prevalence of miserable poverty, such as weighs down our modern civilization, indulgence in luxury is a crime. More than once he disposes briefly and pungently of the time-honored fallacy that the purchase and encouragement of luxuries relieves economic distress, and in some mysterious way is an act of social virtue. As early as 1857, his first essay on social matters, "The Political Economy of Art," handled this question; and "Unto This Last" and "Munera Pulveris" reiterated with increasing emphasis his conviction that, while thousands are suffering from slow starvation in our very midst, only lack of imagination renders personal expenditure a pleasure to any one in a Christian country. His first full, grave, and comprehensive utterance on social problems ends with the heartfelt and serious words: "Consider whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us if we saw clearly at our sides the misery which accompanies it in the world. Luxury is indeed possible in the future — innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast unless he sat blindfold." [1]

[1] *Unto This Last*, "Conclusion."

This plea for abstention from luxury sounds strangely on the lips of the prophet of the æsthetic revival, who had done more than any one man to awaken the craving for beauty among his countrymen. Yet even Ruskin's early work, with its impassioned and manifold efforts to bring the world's loveliness into contact with men's souls, had at heart a profound longing for simplicity, a conviction that we are meant to find our joy, our peace, not in the elaboration of apparatus, but in the contemplation of nature. William Morris tells us in his "News from Nowhere" that the mood of the future, "the spirit of the new days, was to be delight in the life of the world: intense and almost overweening love of the very skin and surface of the earth on which man dwells. . . . All other moods save this had been exhausted." Such a mood, only touched with clear recognition of the spiritual mystery and message of Nature, is that which Ruskin from the first wistfully sought.

It was by no strained transition that the thoughts of "Modern Painters" developed in a tender conscience the feeling that to swathe life in luxuries was a wrong to society as well as to the soul. Already, in the second volume of this book, Ruskin was questioning with the fervid and overwrought eloquence of his youth, how far even the contemplation of beauty has a right to absorb us in this world of pain. The question recurred with increasing force, till the principles of his maturer life transformed the purely personal impulse of revolt into a larger social creed and a specific rule

of conduct. The distinction between material and artistic luxury Ruskin always clearly draws, nor is he ever deserted by the hope that the time shall come when the race, housed and fed, may spare its energies for the creation of values of mere delight; but pending the present distress, his counsel is stringent and clear. "Under pressure of poverty, all production to be of useful articles,"[1] is one of his primary rules. "You can never be wrong," he says in "Munera Pulveris," "in employing any laborer to produce food, house-room, clothes, or fuel: but you are always wrong if you employ him to produce nothing (for then some other laborer must be worked double time to feed him) and you are generally wrong at present if you employ him (unless he can do nothing else) to produce works of art or luxuries."[2] Perhaps a brief passage from "Time and Tide" sums up most quietly and concisely Ruskin's later teaching: "It is popularly supposed that it benefits a nation to invent a want. But the fact is that the true benefit is in extinguishing a want, — in living with as few wants as possible."

Ruskin is not alone in his paradox: he joins a mighty fellowship. "Civilization: its Cause and Cure," is the heading to much modern perplexity; and even those for whom such a phrase is too drastic in suggestion are often coming to feel that the real quest of civilization, however obscured, is to bring the race to Nature. The return to nature

[1] *The Queen of the Air*, ch. iii.

[2] *Munera Pulveris*, ch. vi. "Mastership."

heralded by Rousseau, and powerfully attractive in the post-revolutionary period, has proved more than a sentimental incident. Its appeal has grown clearer and clearer as society has become more intricate, and it haunts people to-day as the longing for mountain air haunts a sensitive person in a ballroom. Our comfort stifles us, the elaborate forms and objects that surround us lay on us an unbearable burden, and we realize that would we gain once more the free heart of the child, we must return to child-conditions. The Transcendentalists in America, — Emerson, Whitman, and above all Thoreau,— Tolstoi in Russia, Maeterlinck in Belgium, Hauptmann in Germany, and a whole group, constantly widening, of young socialists in England, have expressed this impulse as clearly as Rousseau or Obermann or Lamartine or Shelley or Wordsworth or Byron. As the impulse advances, it recognizes that the natural life of the future cannot be won by mere reaction, by such quest of savage solitude as Chateaubriand celebrated, or such indulgence of wild desire as Byron sought; but that it must be a life developed on a mighty background of race-experience. Having conquered, out of many trials with the false and much knowledge of what artificial conditions can offer, the rare power to reject, it will select for its environment those things that abide and that are open to all, and will shape itself into wise and tranquil harmony with the world as it issued from the hand of God.

How far the duty of simplification should ex-

tend, and where the line of personal possessions should be drawn, is of course a matter for private decision: nor does Ruskin try to decide it specifically, being quite aware of the difficulty and complexity of the question. That there is a point where asceticism becomes folly and cripples life instead of ministering to it, he never doubts, and he knows the unwisdom of pressing people too far, lest they rebel. A rich old lady was once persuaded by a zealous evangelical curate to renounce the world. She sold her house, she scattered her establishment, she settled herself in a cheap lodging, and invited the curate to tea. He came. The meal was of the simplest; but the spoons were silver. The curate, young and consistent, remonstrated, and demanded that they be sold, and the price given to the Lord. But the social conscience of his parishioner had been strained to the utmost; to eat with pewter was more than she could bear; and the curate had ruined his cause. For willing, since sin she must, to sin with comfort, she bought back her house and her horses, reassembled her servants, and returned to all her worldly ways. Few mortals live who have not their silver spoons: the point comes to every one where readiness to refrain ceases. To find this point is a purely personal matter, and it is left so by Ruskin. "There are therefore three things to be enforced," he says, "in employing any poor person. You must employ him first to make useful things; second, of the several (suppose equally useful) things he can produce, you must set him to make that which will

cause him to lead the healthiest life; lastly, of the things produced, it remains a question of wisdom and conscience how much you are to take yourself, and how much to leave to others."

It is noteworthy, however, that any one who follows Ruskin's suggestions, and brings the moral factor into all his life as a consumer, will find the question of simplicity pretty well determined for him by the shrinkage of his income. Ruskin is very strenuous in insisting that so far as possible we should know the conditions under which our goods were made. Now, generally speaking, —

> "Sweat-shops we rail at, sad and serious,
> Yet hunt the trail of cheapness with the rest;
> For look, how far the east is from the west,
> So far hath Consequence been set from us."

And so complex are our conditions, that any one who attempts to keep his practical relations and functions free from the taint of economic wrong, is likely to be both somewhat unhappy and very poor.

It is open to inquiry, however, whether such a man might not know a peculiar blessedness. The feeling that Poverty may be a good instead of an evil seems creeping back into the world once more, a surprised and modest guest. Again the message of Langland sounds and summons, and men are found who "praise poverty for best, if patience it follow." For suddenly, in alien days, the Spirit loved by St. Francis has reappeared and walks our modern earth, though unseen except by the watchful eyes of dreamers.

Such a dreamer is Ruskin. Yet his writings hold no lack of suggestions immediate, practical, and simple. No other social critic has given so many feasible commands, for those who are really in earnest to follow while the world waits for those larger changes which he so daringly imagines. The great principles which we have outlined may seem too subtle or too sweeping for our acceptance. We may have nothing whatever to do with economic production, and our relations as consumers may seem too deeply embedded in the automatic play of circumstance for us to affect them. But the social belief of Ruskin goes beyond what we may call the passive aspects of life. It treats of positive, practical matters, duties open to the whole world. We have already quoted from that touching elegiac strain, the lecture on "The Mystery of Life," the review of the achievement, or rather the failure, of the centuries. From this review, Ruskin infers our present duty: —

"Whatever our station in life may be, at this crisis those of us who mean to fulfill our duty ought, first, to live on as little as we can; and secondly to do all the wholesome work for it we can, and to spend all we can spare in doing all the sure good we can. And sure good is first in feeding people, then in dressing people, then in lodging people, and lastly in rightly pleasing people, with arts or sciences, or any other subject of thought."

As Ruskin conceives them, these social functions, which sound so simple, imply of course, on a large scale, perfect national housekeeping, and on

a smaller scale, beside their literal meaning, the sort of activity illustrated by his own efforts to promote tenement house reform.

"These, then, are the three first needs of civilized life; and the law for every Christian man and woman is, that they shall be in direct service towards one of these three needs, as far as is consistent with their own special occupation, and if they have no special business then wholly in one of these services. And out of such exertion in plain duty, all other good will come."

The extension of the moral consciousness through all relations of production and consumption; the simplification of life, and the abandonment of luxury at least during the present crisis; the active devotion to some form of social service; these are the most vital factors of Ruskin's social teaching as it affects the individual. They are still startling, still unreceived: yet parts of them at all events fall less strangely on our ears than on those of the generation of 1860. The fantastic though often lovely vagaries, and the whimsical exaggeration with which they were mingled, did much to discredit them. They were hard sayings at best. Moreover, Ruskin's thought grew and changed as he continued to write, and was full of inconsistencies of detail and theory, though in regard to fundamental principles there was from first to last no wavering, only increasing clearness and emphasis. It would be hard to say whether the world were more puzzled or offended when the man who

had purveyed its pleasures took to denouncing its sins. Great allowances should be made for a poet and dreamer, forced by circumstance into the alien and uncongenial region of economic theories and facts. Such a man is likely to mingle his wisdom with the logic of dreams. Men are likely to reject him without a hearing, instead of making allowances, and realizing that poetry holds at times the truth of the future. Not all Ruskin's popularity could avert this fate. Obloquy and apathy greeted what he believed to be the message of salvation; he sheathed himself for response in ironical and extreme utterances that belied his gentleness of heart and clearness of vision. At last his sensitive nature, more and more wrought and strained by contact with the forces of inertia and selfishness, turned to madness, and what should have been one of the happiest careers of the century was changed into a tragedy and a martyrdom.

## CHAPTER X

### WHAT TO DO: ACCORDING TO ARNOLD

WHILE Ruskin's expression if not his thought was becoming more and more strained and extreme, the modern school of political economy was arising. Slowly it developed that opposition to the Manchester School, that enlarged idea of the scope of its science, which, if not yet accepted, is still every day gaining ground. In a complete history of social thought, the speculations of this school would occupy a leading place; but it takes a long time for such speculations to sift into literature, and thence into life; and with literature, this book is concerned.

The general thought and feeling turned indeed at about this time quite a sharp corner; but it was not in the direction of the economists. In our rapid and inadequate sketch, we have reached the decade between 1870 and 1880. Novel and essay alike had witnessed to the awakening of the social consciousness; and now that consciousness, perhaps strained too long on one point, revolted.

In 1870, the century felt itself already very old. Romanticism as a tradition was played out; the *sæculum realisticum* was in full sway. Rossetti and the few mournful spirits who remained true to

the great romantic tradition and intensified it, were living consciously isolated in an alien world. Their time was to come, and a critical, disillusioned century was to end with a renascence of wonder and mysticism: but just now, wonder was in abeyance, and mysticism despised. Reaction from the ill-fated Utopias of '48 still inspired a sense of caution and disillusion. Thirty years of restlessness, speculation, revolution, and spasmodic industrial agitation had left social distress apparently just where it was before; and an impatient instinct made people turn away their eyes and ears, and refuse to listen to any more hortatory and impassioned invective against industrial wrongs. Carlyle no longer struggled obscurely for recognition. His genius was recognized; his message, judged by its salient inconsistencies, dismissed as a whole, while admired in parts. Ruskin had an audience composed of a few cranks and a few simple-hearted; and the mixture of unpalatable truth and untenable vagary in his writings chiefly served for the time being to throw unconventional social thought into discredit. The French Commune of 1870 quickened international fears and hopes less than the revolution of 1848 had done; for it seemed so obviously the result of conditions peculiar to unhappy France that the other nations simply retired with satisfaction into their own sense of conservative social security. So far as the misery of the poor was concerned, the rise of practical philanthropy and of sociological investigation were applying temporary balm to the public

conscience. The decade marked a reaction in social passion, and England seemed slipping back into the apathy and indifference, though hardly into the complacency, of 1830.

With society in this state of mind, nothing could have been more salutary than the tone adopted by Arnold. He showed the social landscape from a new point of view. The social prophets from 1830 to 1870 had been trying to reach the intelligence of the public through its conscience; Arnold tried to reach its conscience through its intelligence. His predecessors had been pointing out the sins of the rich and the deprivations of the poor; he busied himself with the deprivations of the rich, and let the sins of all classes severely alone.

Ridicule is much harder to bear than denunciation, especially when it is the burden of books singularly clever and entertaining. Arnold stung his public into attention. His shafts flew straight, and rankled. "Culture and Anarchy" moves with a flexible, mocking, scintillating ease, which may irritate and antagonize, but can never bore, the reader. Languor is not compatible with its pages. In its way, it is as quickening a book as "Sartor Resartus." Its effect may have been less because in any community there are fewer people to respond to an intellectual than to a moral stimulus; but it did its work, it aroused an entirely new set of hearers to the recognition of anarchy in our so-called "order," and it started an impulse for reform and change in a new direction.

Despite Arnold's scoffing manner, the critics who accused him of flippancy were wide of the mark. The refreshing lightness of his tone hid deep earnestness and strong thinking. Through appeal as through invective, he eschewed ethical phraseology and any taint of cant. Lack of light troubled him more than selfishness or greed. To shake off intellectual rigidity and self-satisfaction; to permit the free play of consciousness about social conventions, and no longer to assume them as immutable; to despise the ideals of the Philistines and to come out from among them, — such was his summons to his readers.

With that instinct for large historical views which Matthew Arnold probably inherited from his father, he sought in the past for a great expression of the attitude he admired. He found it in the spirit of Greece, and following a hint of Heine's, he adopted the distinction between Hellenism and Hebraism, and made of it the centre and pivot in his interpretation of English life. Arnold's study of these two tendencies, and his application of them, is one of the most illuminating parts of his teaching. It was of course Hellenism which he sought to foster: Hellenism, with its stress on intelligence and gentleness, its demand for sincerity of thought rather than of heart. Nor was the reason for Arnold's strong accent on the Greek spirit any mere personal preference; it was his conviction that, while both factors are necessary in social evolution rightly viewed, his own particular race had already too much of an Hebraic bent. "The

governing idea of Hellenism," which is, as he tells us, "spontaneity of consciousness," seems to him far more important to latter-day England than that "strictness of conscience" which belongs to Hebraism, and of which the English nation, since the first days of Puritanism, has had so large a share. "The uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are: the uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience." "Energy driving at practice" is not lacking in the English people, but "the intelligence driving at those ideas which are, after all, the basis of right practice" is woefully absent among them. The remedy must be deeper penetration into the eternal truths of the inner life; clearer, more disinterested understanding of relations, of historic perspectives, and consequently of the present state of things; escape from prejudice, narrowness, false dogmatism, by bathing and floating our petrified ideas in the large current of the great thoughts of the world. And meanwhile we must wholly abstain from action.

It is curious, turning from Carlyle and Ruskin, to hear the English arraigned for over-strictness of conscience; and it may appear indeed a paradox to seek to heal the clamorous, pitiful needs of the very practical world by self-culture. Yet as one reads Arnold's brilliant analysis of the average Englishman, he realizes that inability to see may be an even more fundamental barrier to wholesome change than reluctance to act. Arnold is keenly aware that modern society is dealing with tremendous forces, which sooner or later it must master

and control. But for such mastery, understanding is, he insists, the chief requisite. "Now the iron force of adhesion to the old routine — social, political, religious — has wonderfully yielded: the iron force of exclusion of all that is new has wonderfully yielded. The danger now is, not that people should obstinately refuse to allow anything but their old routine to pass for reason and the will of God, but either that they should allow some novelty or other to pass for these too easily, or else that they should underrate the importance of them altogether, and think it enough to follow action for its own sake, without troubling themselves to make reason and the will of God prevail therein."[1] "It is said that a man with my theories of sweetness and light is full of antipathy against the rougher and coarser movements going on around him, that he will not lend a hand to the humble operation of uprooting evil by their means, and that therefore the believers in action grow impatient with him. But what if rough and coarse action, ill-calculated action, action with insufficient light, is, and has for a long time been, our bane? What if our urgent want now is, not to act at any price, but rather to lay in a stock of light for our difficulties?"[2]

The danger in this sort of teaching is of course that it will be eagerly taken as sanction by indolence. Its high intellectual seriousness, its call to ascetic energy of thought, will be passed over unheeded by throngs of people who hail any theory

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. i.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. ii.

that bids them turn away from action, finding in it encouragement to ignore altogether questions of the larger life, and to feel a certain superiority in the very negligence. Arnold, as popularly understood, represents the intellectual attitude that thought itself most enlightened from 1870 for twenty odd years. It is an attitude still prevalent enough, as journalism and universities can testify. All around us, we meet its urbane, subtle, satirical spirit, its polite nihilism, its suspicion of enthusiasm and of practical effort, its knack of rousing to real vigor only when the enthusiasms of other people are to be snubbed. So common is it still, so attractive a refuge for the sensitive from the brutalities of life and the insistence of its problems, that one hesitates even to hint that it is becoming superseded. Yet surely a new attitude is springing up beside it, in college and city, in literature and art; and already we look back to Arnold's strong and vivid work as belonging rather to history than to the things that are.

But in Arnold himself, writing when he did, the attitude was almost wholly noble. His was no desire for a shrinking from the common life into the pleasures of an isolated minority. His aim, through writings which have been curiously misunderstood or heeded only in parts, was everywhere social. In one of his last poems, he tells us of a vision that came to him among the beloved solitudes of the Alps, — the vision of Sénancourt, the man of the Revolution, who in his day had withdrawn to the wilderness, unable to endure the storms of

passion which agitated the world. And the message of Sénancourt to the modern poet, who has so much in fellowship with him, is at once a warning and an incentive. He speaks of himself, and then turns to his brother of the future: —

> "Though late, though weak, though dimmed, yet tell
> Hope to a world new-made!
> . . . . . .
> What still of strength is left, employ
> This end to help attain:
> *One common wave of hope and joy*
> *Lifting mankind again.*"[1]

The attainment of this "common wave of hope and joy" is the end and aim of Arnold's social writings: there is no stronger social idealist than this most fastidious of critics. His stress on sweetness and light leads straight to his conviction of the responsibility of the privileged: a responsibility that can never rest till the highest joys of life become the common heritage. If he pleads for culture, he seeks a culture which all can share; if he deprecates action, it is simply because action is premature. He bears in his soul the unquenchable modern desire for the good of the collective whole.

"He who works for sweetness and light, works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater! — the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we all

[1] *Obermann Once More.*

come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light."[1]

In such passages we see the high seriousness and noble breadth of the man whom careless readers flouted as an intellectual snob. It is indeed, however, a far cry from the vehement appeal for action at any cost, of any kind, made by Carlyle in 1840, to this timorous demand for consideration and for pause; yet Arnold utters his plea as truly as Carlyle uttered his, out of a deep desire for a general good. The later plea has a pathetic undertone. For the dangers, during the thirty years from 1840 to 1870, had neither changed nor lessened: they had simply drawn nearer; but there was no longer any trumpet-voice to call the sons of deliverance to rally. Rather they were bidden, each man to his hermitage of thought, there to reflect, pause, and bide his time. To deprecate action was the best wisdom, the safest counsel, that the ablest social critic could offer.

It was a strange reversal of the natural movement of forces, and many things might be inferred from this mood of hesitation which suddenly overtook the thinking public. The social situation was evidently, at the beginning of the Victorian period, more complex than the most far-sighted critic had imagined. A whole generation had brooded over it with increasing bewilderment; and in 1870, when thirty years had passed, the chief counsel

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. i.

that commended itself to the clearest minds was to call a halt. Clough's urgent, humorous appeal, "For God's sake, do not stir there," still echoed as the watchword of the hour. Arnold's plea for recoil into inaction was almost the only intelligible word of social thought. It was the last, before a new period which suddenly revealed a new force. Social thought had reached an *impasse*, from which no by-way of escape seemed to lead to freedom. It was the privilege of the men who wrote and wrought after 1880 to start upon a track which, not yet followed to the end, appears at least to open toward a light that brightens as we proceed.

## CHAPTER XI

### TOWARD DEMOCRACY

SWEEPING plans of reform are in discredit with a great many people; for it is claimed, with some show of justice, that no change is worth anything except a change in the human heart. Yet this is only one side of the truth; good institutions make good men, as surely as good men make good institutions. Every English thinker of the last generation saw that, till the millennium should come, the mere attempt to regenerate individuals would never renovate society. As soon as individuals are regenerated, they set to work to alter conditions, and a new collective conscience must express itself not only through personal action, but in new social organization of the collective life.

Toward some ideal of social reconstruction our fathers were all feeling their way in the dark. Perhaps the chief value of their tentative thought to us is that we may see in it the genesis of our own. That is the best conviction for the present toward which the depths of the past have moved. On the surface of any period lie presumptions, assumptions enow, the lazy foam of opinion left by the receding breakers of the past. Beneath are profounder instincts of mind and spirit, stir-

ring in seeming isolation, yet irresistibly drawn into one current of tendency. Find these, and they carry us onward to that future of the last generation which is the present of our own.

The most important of these currents in our century we shall find if we look for the attitude of our fathers toward democracy. At the beginning of the Victorian age, this attitude was by no means a foregone conclusion. Democracy the whole civilized world was indeed facing; but America alone among the great nations had accepted it, and her example through this epoch was not, as we have seen, especially reassuring to Europe. Many of the most ardent protests against social and industrial injustice, many of the most radical utterances made, came from men who were stanch monarchists and aristocrats, and who often indeed thought that they saw in the progress of democracy the chief reason for the misfortunes and anomalies of the times. "A king given, an aristocracy given," wrote Frederick Denison Maurice in 1852, "and I can see my way clearly to call upon them to do the work which God has laid upon them: to repent of their sins, to labor that the whole manhood of the country may have a voice, that every member of Christ's body may be indeed a free man. But reconstitute society upon the democratic basis, — treat the sovereign and the aristocracy as not intended to rule and guide the land, as only hold ing their commissions from us, — and I anticipate nothing but a most accursed sacerdotal rule, or a military despotism." Such dark anticipations

were by no means peculiar to this gentle and deep-souled man. Carlyle and Ruskin, neither disciples nor masters of the "Christian Socialists," were one with them in their utter distrust of that new popular power which seemed invading the world. A ship trying to round Cape Horn in bad weather by vote of the sailors instead of by will of the captain, a troop of unbridled horses kicking their heels and scampering where they would, are the contemptuous figures under which democracy appears to Carlyle. That individual folly multiplied, — and the English nation appeared to him as "ten million of men mostly fools," — could result in collective wisdom was an idea which seemed to him to carry its own refutation. No book, perhaps, had done so much as his "French Revolution" to bring home to the public the breathless sense of the invasion of the modern world by the People; but the revolutionary drama, as conceived by him, centres in retribution rather than in prophecy, and all the marvelous eloquence and power of the book hail, as it were, the breaking of a thunderstorm rather than the coming of the dawn. Through all his later books, recognition blends curiously with terror, and repudiation of the democratic idea alternates with reluctant welcome in a way that suggests a mind struggling with a current which it finds impossible to stem, but to which it will not yield. "Alas, on this side of the Atlantic and on that, Democracy, we apprehend, is forever impossible."[1] But again: "Uni-

[1] *Latter Day Pamphlets*, "The Present Time."

versal democracy, whatever we may think of it, has declared itself as an inevitable fact of the days in which we live." And finally, society desperately placed on the horns of the dilemma: "How in conjunction with inevitable democracy, indispensable sovereignty is to exist; certainly it is the hugest question ever heretofore propounded to mankind!" [1]

Carlyle's bitter scorn has its salutary gift for us, if it serve only to awaken a challenge and a question at the heart of our too often shallow optimism. For we Americans take the word democracy lightly upon our lips; but really to believe and accept it, not with the excitement of the Fourth of July orator, but with the ardent, solemn consecration that may mean sacrifice, is the most tremendous test of faith in God and man, and in man's power to attain the God-like, that has ever been imposed on a bewildered and helpless humanity. Belief in democracy is the last demand of idealism. We are not likely to forget this: we whose national Credo must be spoken in the presence of the seething throngs of the outcasts of Europe. To look our national situation squarely in the face and say that the cure for democracy is more democracy requires a reverential trust toward humanity at large such as only the mystic who avoids men has in the past been able to hold with any degree of steadiness. To make such trust th prevailing mood of the statesman who guides men will need more than one generation.

[1] *Past and Present*, book iv. ch. i. "Aristocracies."

But however one may explain the position of Carlyle, whatever value, indeed, one may feel that it still holds for us, the inconsistency of the old seer led him to disastrous conclusions. Teufelsdröckh in the wilderness could exclaim with Novalis: "We touch Heaven when we lay our hands upon a human body," and could meditate with holy rapture on the sacredness of human nature and the brotherhood of man. Teufelsdröckh in the world, elbowing, jostling, observing his brothers, found enthusiasm less easy, and was inclined to despise the race very much as Swift had done before him. Long ago, Mazzini, a man of less provincial outlook and less intermittent idealism than Carlyle, pointed out that the great Scotchman's fear of democracy sprang from a profound distrust of human nature. His contradictory vibrations between a mystic reverence for man and an instinctive contempt for men make him interesting as a figure of transition; but they show more clearly than any other features of his teaching that his real power lay rather in flashes of feeling than in steady thought, and they naturally lead to the harsh and painful attitude of his later years. For with imperative craving to revere, with perception that all which had insured reverence in the past was dying or doomed, with scant faith in the possibilities of humanity at large, Carlyle fell back on the demand for heroes; and, when spiritual heroes seemed lacking, took the most obvious refuge open to him and exalted mere force and might. The impulse grew upon him, till the man who abhorred

democracy fell into the extreme error of democracy of the crudest and basest type, and seemed through the long years of his decadence to deny that very sense for spiritual values which he had done so much to reawaken in England, to accept with no qualifications the aristocracy of force, and to admire and seek one thing only: the rule of the strongest.

Yet through all inconsistencies and prejudices, Carlyle had the instinct of a prophet. For he saw as clearly that democracy was inevitable as he believed that it was absurd. The century has justified his prediction, if it has not yet disproved his fears. Time passed on; and the conviction that democracy had come, and come to stay, slowly possessed the European world. It is instructive to note the gradual change which has led men from denying to deploring, and from deploring to investigating, the new force and its implications.

With the clinging to aristocratic theory so persistent during the early Victorian period went naturally enough a marked ignorance concerning the common people. The literature of the time is distinctly a class literature, written by the privileged for the privileged. It is fraught indeed with a growing sense of social responsibility, but it has no real knowledge of the classes whose cause it pleads. Carlyle, the son of labor, Ruskin, the son of privilege, are equally remote from the working-people. They write about them with fervent sympathy: they wax eloquent over the dignity of the

laborer; but sympathy and eloquence yield to perplexed silence when evidence as to the laborer's real thought or character is needed. As a concrete fact, democracy consists of the Demos. Before 1880, Demos was an unknown quantity to the men who discussed him. He represented a threatening force, to be feared, to be pitied, to be exhorted, to be reviled, to be glorified, but to be approached, — never. Nothing will more clearly betray to the future the sharp alienation of classes in the Victorian period than the tone of our literature of reform. Carlyle hardly ever addressed the working-classes directly, as if they too were intelligent mortals, open to the appeal of books. Ruskin did try to get into touch with them; and there could be no more amusing and pathetic illustration of the utter ineptitude of the man of culture trying to "reach the masses," than this earnest and high-souled gentleman gravely addressing to the British workingman month by month that beautiful and unintelligible medley, "Fors Clavigera." Both thinkers suggest scheme after scheme to remedy the suffering of the poor; the people whom these schemes concern are in their minds a helpless throng, to be compassionately released from unjust conditions, and graciously and wisely provided for, — by whom? The answer halts; and a spirit of bewildered discouragement pervades the most heart-felt pleas for social regeneration. One hope, one suggestion of help, never occurs, — that the people should work out in any degree their own deliverance. The idea that the initiative to social salva-

tion should spring from the working-classes, an idea already clearly held by Mazzini, already the life of our great Lincoln, was as yet contemplated, or at least voiced, by no Englishman of imagination.

Men of observation were as ignorant as men of theory in regard to the real character of the wage-earning class, and to the forces stirring among them. In the Victorian novel before 1880, the close study of the personal types produced by our modern industrial system — a study thrilling in dramatic interest, vast in significance, direct in bearing upon social theories — had hardly begun. The few attempts which fiction made to draw near to the working-people were usually conspicuous failures. Several well-known stories of the period tried to describe a representative labor-man: "Sybil," "Hard Times," "Alton Locke," and "Felix Holt." It is difficult to say which portrait is most absurd, though probably the palm belongs to Disraeli's preposterous Gerard, with his grandiloquent speech and his hidden descent from a line of earls. The camel evolved from the inner consciousness of the Teuton is no further removed from fact than are all these high-toned and poetic gentlemen, with their excellent English and delicate sentiments, from the labor leader *de facto*. Dickens, for all his rough workmanship, is here as always nearer than any other novelist of transition to the true nature of the people, and one may still feel, in reading the story of Stephen Blackpool, the pathos and the power of truth. Yet the success here is due rather to intuition than to knowledge, for in

the same book the ridiculous studies of the Agitator and of the factory hands in general show that Dickens' familiarity failed, though his sympathy continued, when he turned from the trading to the industrial classes. Occasionally the minor fiction of the time tries to present phases of industrial life; but none of it can be said to impart that sense of assured fact which we feel as we listen to the talk at the Hall Farm or at Hardy's sheep-shearing. With all its would-be realism, modern fiction has till lately stopped short of pictures of the working-people; indeed, so wide was the social gulf that men of the same nation and language tried in vain to look across it into each other's eyes.

In truth, the modern proletariat class had sprung into existence so rapidly that neither art nor thought could at once realize its presence. Even while the imagination was adjusting itself to the rise of the middle class supplanting the old aristocracy, the new power was arriving on the scene. Through the Victorian period a new cleavage of classes is arriving, is accomplished. The swift change in emphasis comes out with startling clearness if we turn from Carlyle, Ruskin, and the modern novel to the work of Arnold; for Arnold was the first man to accept society exactly as it was. Carlyle signaled the rise into power of the manufacturing class, yet he viewed this class from a distance. It was a new force, ominous but in the main unknown; and the full fervor of his irony was aimed at that old aristocracy with whom

his hopes lingered still. In the sparkling wit of Arnold, the satiric accent has changed. It falls clear and scathing on the middle class. His satire, attacking the Barbarians, takes no longer the form of invective seeking to arouse, but the form of ridicule seeking to discredit. Suavely but decisively we are bidden to turn our thoughts from these interesting but fossil phenomena to the class which holds the present in its keeping. This is the class of the Philistines; and with the Philistines Arnold's most serious, intimate, and memorable social studies are concerned. Yet he is perfectly well aware of the advent of another power. As early as 1870, he showed with exquisite lucidity that the present of Carlyle, so startling in novelty when the old sage began to write, was already becoming superseded, that the reign of the middle class was drawing to an end, and that the way was opening to that new force of the people, whom Carlyle had only discerned in the distance, incoherent, undefined, obscured by the commanding figures of the bourgeoisie.

This force Arnold does not understand any better than his predecessors. He can find for it no more distinctive name than "Populace," and he speaks of it with a distant, puzzled air, aware chiefly that certain of its obvious attributes jar sadly on his nerves. There is a note of irritability in his recognition of the advent of this new Personage, rough, lawless, noisy, upon the world's stage. "His appearance is really distressing," sighs Arnold, "because too many cooks spoil the broth."

We are far indeed from Lincoln's simple, reverent trust in the "plain people." But he sees with entire clearness that the new-comer is here to stay. The liberalism of Macaulay has had its day, and has passed from the front to the rear of progress. Against this liberalism, Arnold tells us, Newman, that chivalrous Knight of the Holy Ghost, had run his heroic tilt in 1840, and had suffered sad defeat: — "But what was it, this Liberalism, as Dr. Newman saw it, and as it finally broke the Oxford Movement? It was the great middle-class liberalism, which had for the cardinal points of its belief the Reform Bill of 1832 and local self-government in politics; in the social sphere, free trade, unrestricted competition, and the making of large industrial fortunes; in the religious sphere, the dissidence of dissent, and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion. . . . And where is this great force of Philistinism now? It is thrust into the second rank, it is become a power of yesterday, it has lost the future. A new power has suddenly appeared. . . . I have said that the new and more democratic force which is now superseding our old middle-class liberalism cannot yet be rightly judged."[1] "The middle classes, remaining as they are now, with their narrow, harsh, and unattractive spirit and culture, will almost certainly fail to mould or to assimilate the masses below them, whose sympathies are at the present moment actually wider and more liberal than theirs. They arrive, these masses, eager to enter into possession

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. i. "Sweetness and Light."

of the world, to gain a more vivid sense of their own life and activity." [1] "Democracy is trying to affirm its own essence; to live, to enjoy, to possess the world, as aristocracy has tried, and successfully tried, before it." [2]

The apostle of culture as the apostle of democracy is assuredly a spectacle to arouse surprise. No author of the Victorian era was perhaps naturally so devoid of democratic instincts. The doctrine of the remnant and the alien pervades his thought; his books are the shibboleth of the few, and sealed to the Philistines; his sympathies are to a very slight degree with the people. If such a man accepts the cause of democracy and pleads it, he is impelled by no sentimental motives, but by the irresistible movement of the times, and by a conviction that through democracy alone can a remedy be found, not for the sufferings of one class only, but for the general disorder which makes impossible private peace, freedom, or joy.

Intensely impressed by the vulgarity, insincerity, and anarchy which mark our present condition; intensely eager for a civilization more harmonious and ennobling, Arnold feels that such can be realized only by accepting and enlarging and uplifting the democratic ideal. First among modern English writers he clearly sees the great task that lies before the modern world: the spiritualizing of that mighty democracy which is our fate and our future, whether we will or no. "The difficulty for democracy is how to find and keep high ideals. The

[1] *Essay on Democracy.* [2] *Ibid.*

individuals who compose it are, the bulk of them, persons who need to follow an ideal, not to set one; and one ideal of greatness, high feeling and fine culture, which an aristocracy once supplied to them, they lose by the very fact of ceasing to be a lower order and becoming a democracy. Our society is probably destined to become much more democratic; who or what will give a high tone to the nation then? This is the grave question."[1]

It is a question worth posing, even if no answer were forthcoming; for simply to ask it is a step in advance. Arnold's reply, for a reply he offers, leaves the beaten track. He turns aside from all discussion of that aspect of democracy which is most constantly considered, its political relations and machinery; his daring and audacious thought has had to wait twenty years for a response. This thought is already present, in embryo, in "Culture and Anarchy;" but to find its fullest and ripest expression, we must turn to the two brilliant essays on "Equality" and "Democracy," in which the maturest views and some of the most notable writing of Arnold are to be found.

Arnold had something very definite to say to his generation; and he said it with a composure and self-mastery which could bide their time, and an explicitness which made misunderstanding impossible. And this was his message: that the cure for our materialized and mechanical democracy was not in the retrenchment or extension of the suffrage, not in the reinstatement of the aristocracy, not in any

[1] *Essay on Democracy.*

political, philanthropic, nor even educational measures, but in the application of the democratic principle to our practical social conditions, by means of the establishment of a fuller degree of social equality. "Political freedom may very well be established by aristocratic founders. . . . Social freedom, — equality, — that is rather the field of the conquest of democracies." [1]

"Culture," Arnold had said in "Culture and Anarchy," — "culture seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely, — nourished and not bound by them. This is the *social idea;* and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality." [2] This passage may sound like the unpractical hallucination or the vague theory of the dreamer; but we have only to turn to the later essays to see how very practical, real, and definite a thing Arnold meant when he said of culture, "It seeks to do away with classes." For from first to last, these essays have one deliberate trend: to condemn the English social system, with its wide discrepancies in property and rank, and to plead that a fair degree of equality in material possessions is necessary to that free play of the higher forces through society which we must all supremely desire. "Can it be denied," he writes, "that a certain approach to equality, at any rate a certain reduction of signal inequalities,

[1] *Essay on Democracy.* [2] *Culture and Anarchy,* ch. i.

is a natural, instinctive demand of that impulse which drives society as a whole, — no longer individuals and limited classes only, but the mass of a community, . . . to develop itself with the utmost possible fullness and freedom? Can it be denied that to live in a society of equals tends in general to make a man's spirits expand, and his faculties work easily and actively; while to live in a society of superiors, although it may occasionally be a very good discipline, yet in general tends to tame the spirits, and to make the play of the faculties less secure and active?" [1] By illustrations drawn from ancient Athens and modern France, he tries, rightly or wrongly, to show that nations attain a high degree of civilization just in proportion to the extent to which they foster equality in possessions; and he sums up his thought in an old phrase with a new addition: "Our inequality materializes our upper class, vulgarizes our middle class, brutalizes our lower class," and in one final, terse, pregnant sentence: "We owe our uncivilizedness to our inequality." [2]

Arnold is the first Victorian writer of soberness and literary standing to hold any such position. With one accord, his predecessors had believed that distinctions of rank were essential to noble civilization, and that a democracy meant a dead level of vulgarity. One may agree or not with the paradoxical ground he occupies; one can at least be sure that he held it from no philanthropic motive, and from no sentimental desire to share

[1] *Essay on Democracy.* [2] *Essay on Equality.*

material goods *per se*. He wished for equality — a real, solid, material equality, let us repeat, no mere figment such as is offered by the ballot — because he believed, honestly and as the result of his best thought, that only in such a soil could the graces of life and the noblest joys of life flourish.

This clear-cut position of Arnold's — a position as radical in its way as a modern labor-agitator could desire — came at a significant point. It marked the climax of a long line of social thought, and it pointed the view toward the future. The period that succeeded Arnold was to be full of eager discussion, gathering largely around this very matter. Economic equality was to be demanded more vigorously than ever before; but chiefly by men whose hearts throbbed at the sight of the misery of the poor, and who longed for readjustments of material possessions to relieve material distress. Them the children of sweetness and light were to answer by many voices, insistent, clamorous. They were to assert with frequency, if not with unanimity, that equality would destroy all incentive toward higher social good; that the material deprivations of the majority were the necessary and just price of the romance, color, vigor, and charm which only inequalities could preserve; that culture was the prerogative of an aristocracy; and that the invasion of the multitudes into conscious self-expression and self-government was the death-signal to learning and the arts. And while they have been talking, the words of their acknowledged leader abide at the threshold of the era, reiterating

with calm assurance: "The men of culture are the chief apostles of equality."

Arnold's later writings show more and more strongly his belief that to the people, as full democracy understands the term, belongs the future. In one of his last essays, "Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes," he expresses his whole mind. The essay is an address delivered to the Ipswich Workingmen's College, and the title speaks for itself. Weary of pleading with the middle class, hopeless of the aristocracy, Arnold turned to the Gentiles, to the workers. "Do not be affronted at being compared to the Gentiles," he says to them. "The Gentiles were the human race, the Gentiles were the future." One must be familiar with the tone of contemporary literature fully to appreciate the almost prophetic quality of the essay. For it seeks to awaken in the working-people the initiative impulse, not only to move toward their own salvation, but also to become an active force in realizing the common national good. The exact plea does not matter. The significant thing is that the appeal should be made at all, and that to the coolest and most far-sighted critic of our times should have come the thought that the working-people might be an instrument through whom the nobler collective life of society should be realized.

"Ecce, convertimur ad gentes." It must have seemed to Arnold the counsel of despair: but it was to be a watchword of the next generation. For the time came when democratic theories, despite all withholdings and misgivings, prevailed. Their

terror was to be mitigated though not destroyed, and their inspiration set free, by the correlative development of practical fellowship between classes, and of an heroic faith in the power of society to shape its life as it would.

## CHAPTER XII

### TOWARD AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY and democracy are two words which the early nineteenth century would have found hard to couple. To the common thought, democracy meant a society swayed purely by popular impulse and the instinct of personal liberty. This was natural. The gigantic egotism of the Napoleonic wars and of Byronic poetry were early results of the same impulse, in the spheres of fact and fancy. Other results were the immense industrial expansion, the consequent rapid rise of a self-made bourgeoisie to power, and the varying schools of speculative thought that swiftly appeared.

Yet a second impulse flowed from the mighty source of the young democracy: the social impulse for the common life and the common duty. In 1848, this impulse measured itself against individualism, and fled, routed. Its time had not come, for individualism had not spent its force. Drama, poetry, novel, essay, continued after brief interruption the claim and quest for personal self-realization, flung a challenge at conventions in the name of private freedom, or sought, as the one worthy aim of art, to penetrate the secrets of temperament and personality. Free competition continued to gov-

ern the industrial system. The very centre of the individualist position was England, where John Bull took with especial kindliness to the assertion of his own rights.

It was, then, no wonder that Carlyle and Ruskin hated democracy as they saw it. From self-assertion and from mob-law they turned away their eyes. "Liberty," cries Carlyle, "requires new definitions."[1] "All freedom is error," says Ruskin. "You hear every day greater numbers of foolish people speaking about liberty as if it were such an honorable thing: so far from being that, it is on the whole and in the broadest sense dishonorable, and an attribute of the lower creatures. No human being, however great and powerful, was ever so free as a fish. . . . You will find, on fairly thinking of it, that it is his Restraint which is honorable to man, not his Liberty. . . . The sun has no liberty, a dead leaf has much. The dust of which you are formed has no liberty. Its liberty will come — with its corruption."[2]

The reaction from individualism allied itself in both Carlyle and Ruskin with a strong attraction for the feudal past. But the time was to come when the desire for authority should look no longer to the past, but to the future for its fulfillment: when democracy and authority should be recognized as friends, not foes. Matthew Arnold was perhaps one of the first English writers to abandon the old connections, and to combine the outcry against

[1] *Past and Present*, book iii. ch. xiii.
[2] *The Two Paths.*

individualism with a warm enthusiasm, not for democracy as it is, but for democracy as it may be. He burned no incense on the altar of the past: with a wave of his hands he dismissed the British aristocracy and all their associations, and turned cheerfully to face the coming age. Yet his demand for authority rings clearer than that of his predecessors. "Doing as one likes," that favorite British pastime, is at once the bane of his thought and the butt of his laughter; and the idea that the "assertion of personal liberty" is a worthy social aim is no less distasteful to him than the eccentricities of private English judgment in literary affairs.

"How, in conjunction with inevitable democracy, indispensable sovereignty is to exist:" Carlyle's question gains an ever new emphasis as the century grows older. The search for authority pervades the best social teaching of the Victorian age. Consciously or unconsciously, men have been reverting from the revolutionary idea of freedom, which regards it as the natural birthright of humanity and of each individual, to the Christian ideal, so magnificently set forth in Dante's "Divina Commedia," which views it as the great gift, to be won, either by society or by the man, only as the result of long discipline and willing acceptance of righteous law. What this law may be, in social and industrial relations, thinkers gradually bent their best efforts to discover. The effort continues still.

For final results we must not look to the social thought of our fathers, or we shall be disappointed. Probably no one to-day could find their theories

wholly satisfactory. We are living very fast: in the period before 1880, men were feeling their way uncertainly toward new forms and new ideals, and social theories were continually shifting. Carlyle and Arnold were both in one sense leaders of individualistic thought, and expressed the very tendencies that they repudiated: for they were sons as well as rebels in their relation to their age. That which they desired, whether consciously or not, was not the victory of any one social principle, any consistent scheme or plan. It was a resultant of many principles, an expression of a new social order in vital relation to the entire past of which it was the product. No wonder that their ideas were tentative, contradictory, and inconsistent; no wonder that they are largely superseded: for such an order, life must reveal, not thought invent.

"Liberty requires new definitions." It became gradually evident that the ballot, left to itself, did not secure liberty. It became evident that if collective freedom, if social health, were to be achieved, government must be something more than a series of checks, imposed to guard the individual from interference. It became evident that liberty, if the great word were to mean an harmonious expression of the full powers of the social whole, must carry with it much positive law: not only law prohibitory and punitive, but law which means guidance. The growing desire for authority which plays through our literature mingles in a baffling way with a sense that the old forms of authority vested in a class or a man are effete; contempt and indifference toward

existing political machinery meet curiously an impulse to lay fresh emphasis on the possibilities of political action; and the converging lines of nearly all modern social speculation move toward a new insistence on the opportunity, the duty, the responsibility, of the state.

Carlyle did not solve his own great questions, nor meet his own demands; nor indeed have we yet found the solution. But he did some strong and useful thinking toward solution, and his very inconsistencies are helpful. The sense for the social organism that pulses through his writings from the first implies a conception of the state quite different either from the closely but mechanically articulated system of the Middle Ages, or from the loose modern anarchy of contending and balancing forces. His state, or governing power, was to be in vital relation to the entire life of his citizens: was to provide for their welfare, not by establishing a free field and no favor in the social and industrial struggle, but by positive oversight and enactment. Deeply troubled by the condition of the working-classes, it was natural that Carlyle felt with peculiar force the responsibility of government toward these classes, and that whenever he discusses the function of the state in detail, his emphatic demand was that industrial affairs should pass under public control. This demand he urged with increasing stress during all the writings of his prime. The detailed social suggestions of "Past and Present" — emigration, profit-sharing, free education — are all admirable: if not yet all adopted,

they have at least become so familiar to our ears that we are surprised to hear the timidity with which Carlyle puts them forth. But the great idea which pervades the book, and in which we see that Carlyle has a faith almost desperately strong, is the Organization of Labor.

We must not be misled by the modern sound of this phrase into supposing that Carlyle meant what we should mean to-day. That Labor should organize itself, he never dreamed; for he lacked completely our conception of Labor as an intelligent force. But his hatred of competition led him to feel his way toward some regulating principle which should avoid the cruelty and waste prevalent under the present system: some "organization" which should make for economy and justice. And first he turned to his "Captains of Industry," and dreamed that some vast, voluntary, coöperative movement should supersede competitive individualism, and that the employing class should become sufficiently inspired by intelligence and brotherliness to achieve this end. The power of Carlyle's thought, as well as the slowness of social advance, is illustrated by the fact that people to-day are still discussing the same position. Carlyle himself seems to have turned away from it before long; at least, the thought of a righteous government and its duties haunts him more and more persistently, and in what is perhaps the most striking and forcible of all his social writings, the pamphlet on "The Present Time," published in 1850, we find that Labor is to be organized, no longer by the captains of industry,

but by the state. The supposed speech of the Prime Minister of England, which concludes this tract, is significant, not only for its eloquence, — it is one of the strongest bits of writing in Carlyle's work, — but for its far-sightedness. One finds it curious to note Carlyle's evident sense of extreme audacity in broaching propositions which, though not yet adopted, have become unfortunately hackneyed by repetition. Interrupted and finally hissed down, the Prime Minister yet manages, after pitifully reviewing the condition of the laborers, to propose his remedies: —

"Industrial Regiments — (*Here numerous persons, with big wigs many of them, and austere aspect, whom I take to be Professors of the Dismal Science, start up in an agitated, vehement manner: but the Premier resolutely beckons them down again.*) Regiments not to fight the French or others, who are peaceable enough toward us; but to fight the Bogs and Wildernesses at home and abroad, and to chain the Devils of the Pit which are walking too openly among us.

"Work for you? Work, surely, is not quite undiscoverable, in an earth so wide as ours, if we will take the right methods for it! . . . I already raise near upon Ten Millions, for feeding you in idleness, my nomadic friends: work, under due regulations, I might really try to get of (*here arises indescribable uproar, no longer repressible, from all manner of Economists, Emancipationists, Constitutionalists, and miscellaneous Professors of the Dismal Science, pretty numerously scattered about: and*

*cries of 'Private Enterprise,' 'Rights of Capital,' 'Voluntary Principle,' 'Doctrines of the British Constitution,' swollen by the general assenting hum of all the world, quite drown the Chief Minister for a while. He, with invincible resolution, persists: obtains hearing again.*)

"Respectable Professors of the Dismal Science, soft you a little. Alas, I know what you would say. For my sins, I have read much in those inimitable volumes of yours: really, I should think, some barrowfuls of them in my time, and, in these last forty years of theory and practice, have pretty well seized what of divine message you were sent with to me. Perhaps as small a message, give me leave to say, as ever there was such a noise made about before. Trust me I have not forgotten it, shall never forget it. Those Laws of the Shop-till are indisputable to me: and practically useful in certain departments of the Universe, as the multiplication-table itself. Once I even tried to sail through the Immensities with them, and to front the big coming Eternities with them, but I found it would not do. As the Supreme Rule of Statesmanship, or Government of Men, since this Universe is not wholly a Shop, — no. . . . Do not you interrupt me, but try to understand and help me!

"— Work, was I saying? My indigent, unguided friends, I should think some work might be discoverable for you. Enlist, stand drill; become, from a nomadic Banditti of Idleness, Soldiers of Industry!"[1]

[1] *Latter Day Pamphlets*, "The Present Time."

State employment of the Unemployed! Carlyle's scheme has a strangely modern sound. But after all, the fate of any one who urges it to-day is not unlike that of his Premier. For no sooner had he uttered the ominous words, "organization of labor," than he was "'left speaking,' says our reporter."

Carlyle was vigorously convinced that some form of public authority must intervene to educe order out of our industrial chaos: but concerning details of procedure, he was wisely reticent. Ruskin allowed his imagination freer play. The most practical of our writers in counsel to the individual, he was the most inveterate dreamer in weaving social schemes. Nourished on Plato, More, and Milton, with the additional misfortune of being a poet, he constructed in his mind an ideal state perfect to the last detail. It was to shape at every point the moral and intellectual life of its children. His lovely fantasies should not be scouted: they should take their place with those literary Utopias, from More to William Morris, which may well refresh the prosaic generations, — dreams, without which the world would be poor indeed. It is not unpleasing to an imaginative person to find schemes for bachelors and rosières, and their marriage-processions, blending with suggestions for a progressive income-tax and a maximum limit to the wealth of the rich.[1] A mournful and lovable Don Quixote, his feudal armor capped with the "bonnet rouge," Ruskin called himself, in sheer bewilderment, both

[1] These schemes clearly point, by the way, to our modern theories of eugenics.

Tory and Communist. Yet the simple principle of which he found the application so perplexing is all in words far more easily understood by us than by his first hearers: "Government and coöperation are in all things the law of life: anarchy and competition, the law of death."[1]

But it is Arnold the radical who pleads even more insistently than Carlyle or Ruskin the conservative, for the extension of state activity in England. Intellectual individualist though he was, and inveterate critic of English politics and parties, he repeatedly avowed his final aim without blenching. "I propose to submit to those who have been accustomed to regard all State-action with jealousy, some reasons for thinking that the circumstances which once made that jealousy prudent and natural have undergone an essential change. I desire to lead them to consider with me whether, in the present altered conjuncture, that State-action which was once dangerous may not become, not only without danger in itself, but the means of helping us against dangers from another quarter."[2]

Theorist as Arnold is, his thoughts press much nearer to fact than those of his predecessors. The state of which Carlyle and Ruskin dreamed had no more relation to the British government than the Heavenly Jerusalem. Arnold's ideas took a more practical cast. He would not, indeed, lead us into the field of actual politics, but airs from that region have a way of stealing across us as we turn his

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. v.
[2] *Essay on Democracy.*

pages. Though he was always disclaiming any political aim, he could not keep his hands off questions of the day. His general principles are suggested indirectly in illustration of some immediate issue, like the Real Estates Intestacy Bill, or the famous Bill for marriage with a deceased wife's sister, issues local in interest and now mostly defunct. Perhaps the reason that his brilliant social writings are so little read to-day is that they oscillate between matters so temporary that they have ceased to interest us, and ideals so profound that they carry us out of our depths.

Arnold's ideas about the state, then, are quite within the range of possible, though not of actual politics. He knows the precise lines on which he desires the definite action of the state. The chief of these is in the direction of his own specialty, education. Carlyle had accented the need of strong government to the end of industrial order, Ruskin to the end of moral order: it was natural that Arnold's thoughts lingered in his own province. Yet he had an outlook which swept over far more than one field, and penetrated in almost a startling way to the horizons of the future. "For twenty years," he tells us, "I have felt convinced that for the progress of our civilization here in England, three things were above all necessary: a reduction of those immense inequalities of condition and property among us of which our land system is the base; a genuine municipal system; and public schools for the middle class. These points are hardly dreamed of in our present politics, any one

of them."[1] And again, with the same mixture of caution and audacity, he recurs to his old quarrel with inequality, and tells us, in words that have almost a prophetic ring, that this inequality "will be abated by some measure far beyond the scope of our present politics, whether by the adoption of the French law of bequest, . . . or, as Mr. Mill thought preferable, by fixing the maximum of property which one individual may take by bequest or inheritance, or in some other manner. But this is not likely to come in our time, nor is it to be desired that such a change should come while we are yet ill-prepared for it."

It is obvious that Arnold expected and desired the extension of state functions to result in profound social readjustments, if not in complete social reconstruction. It was because his thought of possible change probed so deep that he urged delay. His conception is that of an evolutionary idealist. That the state, when mechanical, is a danger and a tyranny, he clearly sees; and he asserts that times come when distrust of government is the only safeguard. But there are also times when the best self of the community is sufficiently developed to crave collective expression; and when such a time comes, the whole, which is the state, should be charged with full regulating powers. It is because he longs for the appearance of this best self that Arnold pleads for culture. "Culture," he tells us, "is the most resolute enemy of anarchy, because of the great hopes and designs for the State

[1] *Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes.*

which culture teaches us to nourish." The equality which he wishes, that on which his ideal state is founded, is of a type that cannot exist till civilization has reached a high stage. Like liberty, it waits as a final reward, and is not established as a first condition. His reading of history is far from the antitheses of the theoretical doctrinaire; — this form of government or that, — best in all times, ideal, absolute. An aristocracy first, in the epochs of contraction, says Arnold; since a noble standard of life is the first need of social evolution, and to create it is the function of the aristocracy. To seek equality at too early a point, to consider it as a good in itself, irrespective of the stage of racial development, would be to materialize society; and here Arnold joins issue with socialistic thought, as he understands it, and agrees with those conservative thinkers who fear the rapid progress of an uninformed democracy. But once let a high ideal of living be determined, and equality becomes not only safe but essential to advance; for the race will never abandon an ideal once realized, but will raise all to its level. First to establish a lofty standard: then, through the action of the state, to realize conditions in which the free upward-striving instinct of men may make that standard universal, — such is the order of social evolution. That we are nearly ready for the second type of effort, at least that events are forcing us toward it whether we will or no, Arnold at his best believes. How his predictions were to be verified, he himself would have been the most surprised to discover.

For of all the authors of the period we have studied, it may be said that they know not what they seek. If anything is clear from our review, it is that the whole time is an epoch of beginnings. It is better at invective than at close analysis, better at analysis than at reconstruction. Behind it lies the Revolution, with its vast ideal, its wide failure, its bewildering practical sequence. What lies beyond it? None of the men of the time could have foretold. Out of place in their own generation, they could identify themselves with the forces neither of conservation nor of advance; for conservation meant feudalism, and advance meant Laissez Faire. The sorrowful fervor of Carlyle, with its mingled compassion and contempt for humanity, its hatred and assertion of individualism, its distrust of the laborers and reverence for labor, shows us a mighty but confused genius in the first stages of a great transition. Ruskin accents a similar position, but expresses with more fullness the longing for a society shaped into a rational spiritual organism, governed by vital and adequate law. Arnold brings a new spirit of reaction from sentiment; and his cool survey of the situation is more effective than any emotional outcry. Yet this least sympathetic of our critics is also the most strongly at odds with his generation, advances most subversive demands for the overthrow of distinctions accounted sacred, and asserts the future power of the working-people as their ardent champions fail to do. In the literature of the Victorian age, the next century will see paradox after paradox.

It is the literature of the Privileged, hailing the Unprivileged as masters of the future; it combines an earnest quest for social authority with an entire scorn of the powers that be; it demands for every individual scope for complete self-realization, yet it demands also that free competition be abolished, that "liberty" should "receive new definitions," and that society should be organized with a fullness of law and strictness of oversight such as have so far been tolerated in no modern nation. In a word, it moves toward democracy, but democracy of a wholly new type. It is possible that our grandchildren will understand this literature better than we can understand it to-day, and that its seeming paradoxes may reveal to them unity of impulse where we can see only confusion. They may perceive a synthesis of forces in which all the inconsistencies of Victorian thought are solved. Such a synthesis the men of the time saw not at all; we to-day seem at times to catch faint glimpses of it, but as yet only as a possibility open to question. Will that synthesis be the social democracy of the future? Will it be the socialist state?

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I

When the whirlwind of the French Revolution had passed by, the centre of social passion was found, in England, in the heart of the poets. It remained there for quarter of a century. At the beginning of the Victorian age, it shifted, as we have seen, from the poets to the writers of prose. During fifty years, the prose authors whom we have considered were more thoroughly awake to the gravity of the social situation than any other group of men in England. Politics went serenely on its accustomed path; philanthropy was a modest thing, reforming prisons or founding hospitals, but happily unaware of the widespread social disease which neither strove nor cried, but endured in silence. The arts lamented the absence of great inspirations in modern life, and struggled to create their own inspiration from within and to become ends in themselves, — an effort in which no human power has ever succeeded. Political Economy throve and grew fat in many volumes, doing much fine work, but building on a foundation far narrower than that actual humanity whose varying impulses are irreducible to obedience to the clev-

erest set of mechanical laws. Only the great prose authors felt the irregular pulses of the fevered social organism, and mourned, pleaded, and hoped, as we have seen.

After 1880, the situation changed once more. Again the centre of social passion shifted; it passed over from literature to life. The age of vision belonged to the poets, the age of problem to the essayists and novelists; the age of experiment, then inaugurated, belongs first to the men of action.

There were no longer any essayists of the scope or power of Carlyle, Ruskin, or Arnold. That fact is self-evident. It is harder to draw inferences concerning the novel, for fiction as a whole showed immense vitality: yet Du Maurier was a poor substitute for Thackeray, and Mrs. Ward is certainly an impoverished heir of George Eliot. There were many clever men of letters writing, each with a piquant pose of his own; and the generation did possess at least one notable and delightful figure, — William Morris, — but none can say that literature offered as commanding figures at the end of the century as in the middle. This does not mean that idealism was waning, but that it was absorbed into life. Where were the dreamers of the nineties? Most of them were not writing books. They were in County Councils, on Boards of Arbitration, in Organized Charities, in Social Settlements. Let them begin, like Morris, with art and poetry; they are likely to end as he did with some active propaganda. They are not dreaming nor even preach-

ing social righteousness, — they are trying to practice it. The social passion of the age of Shelley was at two removes from the actual; it soared free in the infinite and heavenly space of the poet's imagination. The social passion of the age of Carlyle came nearer; it moved on earth among men, observing, lamenting, exhorting, but passive still. The social passion of our own times has become a vital part of the life it observes, says little, and does what it may.

A movement thus transferred from art to action is of course difficult to follow, especially when it is young, chaotic, and immensely varied in manifestation. No two people would agree in their emphasis, or place values in the same light; nor is it possible for any one to feel over-confident in distinguishing between organic phenomena of growth and merely accidental expression of the general life-energy which was at stir. Here we must abandon careful literary analysis, and simply give brief impressions, personal and tentative, of the groupings of tendency by which we were surrounded.

To say that the chief interest of our social idealists is shown in act rather than in art is by no means to imply that modern art is not full of social expression. On the contrary, literature and painting are a-tingle with the sense of an expanding consciousness, till the danger is that "problems" will degenerate into fads, and the unemployed find employment not exactly adapted to their needs, as material for sentimental fiction. It might be a fair

guess to hazard that three out of every five respectable novels from the early years of the nineties to these post-war twentieth-century years, have a latent social animus, whether they deal with mere picture, with arraignment, or with constructive suggestions. In every case, a strong general interest underlies the personal plot, and an implied estimate of life in its social reactions is evidently the chief end of the author. The not infrequent failure and crudity only brings into fuller relief the suggestiveness of the effort. Fiction has gained immensely in social scope and conscious social interest. Nowhere was the gain at the close of the century more manifest than in America. Howells and Warner were not so much uncovering the social layers that exist, after the manner of Dickens and Thackeray, as detecting the social layers of our curious country in their very formation. A whole chapter might well be written on the high-thinking novels of Howells alone, with their keen sense for social fact, their keener recognition of social anomaly, their keenest faith in social ideals. But we must resist the temptation to discuss the literature of America.

Not fiction alone showed the new spirit. A vast amount of sociological investigation was going on, and pressed eagerly to practical result. The very meaning of the term "social" was changing, and came to carry in popular thought a wholly new implication. If in the fifties the larger proportion of serious magazine articles were on theological, religious, or scientific topics, to-day a large per cent

deals with sociology. Librarians can hardly introduce quickly enough the great yearly out-put of economic books. Lectures, sermons, addresses without limit, on the same themes, are in our ears. These things are not art; but now and again a severe record of fact, like Walter Wyckoff's "Workers," was touched with a gleam that lifts it to a level with a work of imagination, while depriving it of none of the force of truth. Indeed, the boundary line between art and life is hard to trace when novels inaugurate political movements, and on the other hand modest social experiments are scarcely started before the satirist or the literary critic pounces upon them for "material."

If we try, in this blur of events and ideas, to gain some clear notion of the groupings of social phenomena in England during the last of the century, three chief forms of collective expression arrest us. The first is the vigorous young socialist movement, which sprang into existence with seeming suddenness in the decade between 1880 and 1890, and still continues its lusty career. The next, yet more important, is the surprising spread of practical fellowship and intercourse between members of the alienated classes, and the rise of the workingman into self-expression. And the third is the change in the spirit of the Christian Church.

II

The early Victorian period had pushed the practice of individualism very far, and had vigorously arraigned its theory. Any Carlyle, writing another "Signs of the Times" in 1880, would have predicted a reaction. That reaction appeared. It was not a mere instinct or tendency: it took the form of a social creed and of a definite though imperfectly organized movement. The creed, the movement, are known as socialism; the word is open to all manner of misconception, but what other states the facts?

No one can follow the subtle activities of conscience and thought through the Victorian age, from the beginning, and treat socialism as a slight matter. Too many converging lines lead to it. One may almost say that every positive impulse of reconstruction, no matter from what point it started or on what path it traveled, had moved unconsciously toward this one goal. The impulse of the artist, wishing to beautify the visible world which man has made so ugly, through the united efforts of a free race alive to beauty; the impulse of the philanthropist, longing for the relief of the manifold forms of material distress produced by modern conditions; the impulse of the philosophic dreamer, seeking an ideal social harmony; the impulse of the practical man, noting the waste of a free competitive system, and the economy of centralization; the impulse of the Christian, believing that the Holy City is surely coming down from

Heaven to earth, and that it is his business to translate the great social petitions of the Lord's Prayer into action; the impulse of the skeptic, believing that the race must now bend all its efforts to make life a blessing here, since it has lost all hope of fulfillment or compensation hereafter, — all these play into the strong, comprehensive, growing intention to affect the course of social development now, even if it has never been affected before, by the action of the resolute human will. People of three great classes — those who care most for the graces, those who care most for the comforts, those who care most for the virtues, of life — are drawn toward socialism with a force which all feel, and many, an increasing number, do not even seek to resist. The extension of the authority of the democratic state over industrial matters seems to all these different temperaments to offer at least the first and most hopeful experiment in the direction of social betterment; and the spread of the socialistic spirit in artistic circles, in the Church, in city politics, and even, through the unmoralized form of the Trust, in industry itself, has been so amazingly rapid that the mention of it passed rapidly from a heresy to a platitude.

Among these tendencies, we have followed only the few that have entered literature. Yet even these few are surely enough to show that we are facing in socialism no sudden superficial expression of impatience, but the intellectual and spiritual result, slowly manifest, of much groping thought and confused feeling. Says a recent writer: "The

professed socialist is a rare, perhaps an unnecessary, person, who wishes to instruct and generally succeeds in scaring humanity by bringing out into the light of conscious day the dim principle which is working at the back of the course of events." [1] Socialism is no mere sentiment. It accepts as its starting-point the conviction that the individualist democratic state is a failure, but it seeks not to recede, but to advance. It believes in expressing through the actual constitution of society, that faith in the social organism as a living whole which we have seen so powerfully stirring in our authors. To this end, it holds the policy of collective control in all matters of collective concern The recognition of a common duty toward productive labor; the demand for stable living conditions that shall remove from all classes the hideous pressure of material anxiety; the desire for opportunity equally shared, and hence for the diminution of inequalities in wealth; the reiterated plea for the better and more economical organization of labor through the agency of the state, — all these things enter the socialist spirit and find their home there. Above all, the synthesis of democracy with authority which we have seen the imagination imperatively seeking, and which has constantly baffled its search, finds at last in socialist hopes an answer; not through return to feudalism, but through the ideal of a social system more highly organized than any the past can show. Socialism has proved, indeed, to many paradoxes and perplexed contradictions, a House of Reconciliation.

[1] J. A. Hobson, *Problems of Poverty.*

Why the men of finest feeling and clearest insight in earlier generations failed to see the drift of their own thought or the ideal which would content it is evident enough in retrospect. Each was moving toward socialism with that part of his nature which faced the future; each was held away from it by those strong factors of consciousness which exist in every one, survivals from the inheritance of the past. No one, it is obvious on the surface, could accept or imagine socialism who was still dubiously holding aloof from democracy, and chanting dirges over the dying aristocratic ideal. Only when democracy, recognized as the social destiny of the modern world, had actually forced the eyes of the dreamers from their longing gaze on the landscape of the past, did it reveal its own complex essence, and show within its large nature two antagonistic tendencies which, if developed, would lead to two social forms at least apparently opposed. Our fathers could not see this, but we see it. The socialistic principle, held in solution with individualism during the earlier phases of democracy, is recognized at last as a separate impulse, pulling away toward a sort of social organization which has never yet existed, and which promises results so strange that it is no wonder if men hold back. The question of this generation is not any longer the old controversy between democracy and aristocracy: it is the question between democracy social, bound together by laws more highly elaborated than any society that has yet been known, and democracy individualistic, a

thing governed by principles inherited, unchanged, and hardly modified from the conditions of the natural world. Which of these two types of democracy shall be the social form of the future? This is the only question which the logic of events permits us.

As the past closes, the future opens. Those imaginations that love to speculate about the experiences which await the endless versatility of human nature under new conditions never had a finer opportunity than to-day. Spiritual adventure and romance are in the air, as fiction has been quick to discover. Dramatic possibilities open alluring and awful as we look to the shifting scenes and relations of a mighty social readjustment surely on its way. Nor need we fear stagnation or monotony when the question now before us is decided, whichever theory of the democratic state shall finally prevail. Not the most radical and revolutionary socialist of the modern type regards any social condition that he can imagine to himself as more than the initiation to a process of change and reformation which may last through centuries, the developments of which we can only dimly surmise. Freedom is never an ultimatum; it is only a condition of progress; and every new conquest only leads the way to new struggle. To complete political liberty and to rectify its grievous failures by the acquisition of liberty social and industrial will be as great a work as our generation, and perhaps the next, can accomplish; but once the summit won, we shall cry with Whitman:

"My spirit does but level that lift to pass and continue beyond."

Evolutionary socialism, pleading for coöperation in a process rather than dogmatizing about a final result, is the only significant type now current in England; and stationary communism of the type found in More lingers only among the uneducated. In the best English use, socialism is as far removed from a mechanical theory of a rigid state as it is from the mere revolutionary desire to pull society to pieces, on the one hand, and from humanitarian sentimentality, on the other. Separating itself from pure emotionalism, from violence, and from dogmatism, it seeks simply to bring out into the light of day, to strengthen, and to emphasize those tendencies toward coöperative organization which already exist, and which nearly all able and earnest thinkers of the century, since the visionary ardors of its early years died away, have most eagerly welcomed or longed for.

The modern English socialist movement appeared in the years between 1880 and 1885. The Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League, the Fabian Society, and the Independent Labor Party are names which suggest the various phases of its struggle for organized existence, and the various shades of opinion it has assumed, but hardly give the clue to the intellectual unity which, broadly speaking, underlay them all. We have seen the many prophetic symptoms by which this movement was heralded in thought. The actual operative causes which produced it at just this juncture are

to be sought elsewhere, not in literature, but in the political and industrial world. It was not a very large movement, so far as definitely formulated; it tended increasingly to be merged in the general public sentiment, often unaware of its own tendency, and in the detailed practical efforts that have advanced to meet it. The "Fabian Essays" remain, after many years, its most living and well-considered expression; the very collective authorship of the book witnesses in itself to the new spirit that was abroad, to the reaction from individualism and the common feeling that was stirring many minds of many types to one great aim.

The "Fabian Essays" is good literature. Nearly all the essays, by different writers though they be, have those qualities of brilliancy, readableness, and emotional appeal which separate art from science. The very fact of the literary character of the book was sadly against it in the minds of many serious people; yet this character promoted the enormous sale which suggests that the "Fabian Essays" was perhaps more effective than any one cause in arousing popular English thought to a recognition of socialistic claims. More than this, it bore important witness to that invasion of the world of action by the idealists which we have signaled as one of the significant symptoms of these latter days. The clever young essayists were wavering between literature and life. Sometimes one attraction, sometimes the other, has conquered since the book appeared; but usually it is the attraction of life that has proved the stronger, and most of

the Fabians became absorbed in the routine work of promoting their ideas by good active drudgery.

It would be easy to show, following the satire, eloquence, and demonstration of the book from chapter to chapter, how its underlying ideas develop and harmonize the conflicting elements in the thought of earlier social critics. The "Fabian Essays" is written frankly on the new basis. It does not hesitate between the democratic and the aristocratic state, nor even try to convince a belated public that democracy is here to stay. It assumes democracy, and, the assumption made, proceeds tranquilly, with biting analysis and startling suggestions of positive work to do, to unfold a social faith more coherent, outspoken, and consistent than any critic we have studied has had to offer. The air has cleared; and, whatever one may think of the economics or morals of the authors, it is at least refreshing to be for once in the presence of people who know their own minds, and are free from vagueness, inconsistency, or bewilderment.

The socialism of the Fabians, and indeed of all characteristic English socialists, is not Marxian in type. That is to say, it is not necessarily founded on the materialistic theory of social evolution, but at least allows, if it does not assert, the admission of an ethical or spiritual element in the advance of civilization. On the other hand, it has little in common with the French socialism of 1848; for it holds that the social forms of the future will be an organic growth from those of the present, not a mechanically invented substitution for them. Eng-

lish socialism has its own distinct type, a type derived, as would be easy to show, from the special qualities of the mixed English race. We may relate it with much that is noblest in the social speculations of the nation as through long centuries they have worked themselves clear. Reviving the feeling of Langland toward the laborer as the key to the social situation, the Fabians base their hopes for the realization of the perfect state on the fresh organization of industry. Reverting in many points to the theories of More's "Utopia," they plan to create the environment which shall shape the individual, and give him a fair start. Needless to say, they go farther than either More or Langland, for they expect a general escape from social bondage, and not only wish but hope to realize Utopia in England; and they set forth their schemes to that end with a cheerfulness, alacrity, and confidence stimulating to the most skeptical.

But the intuition of the artist has played quite as important a part as the reasoning of the logician in developing the new social attitude. Nobody would dream of calling William Morris a thinker, yet he is something better than the most picturesque figure of the modern movement. Charm, fervor, self-surrender, — these have always counted at least as much as ideas, despite the discontent of the philosopher, in determining the onward march of men. The fascination of Morris' work is so great that one forgets its lack of thought-values; or rather, let us say that the mere spectacle of this

winsome "dreamer of dreams, born out of his due time," driven by stress of events and emotions to "strive to put the crooked straight" by organizing socialist leagues and haranguing irreverent street audiences on political economy which he did not understand, is evidence of the irresistible impulse forcing the modern dreamer on to act, evidence all the stronger on account of the weakness of the dreamer's theories.

Anarchist and inveterate idealist, Morris is one with socialism on its critical side, but absurdly far from it in constructive ideas. His thought is in the main, literally de-moralized derivation from Ruskin. Like his master, he turned from beauty to life, driven by the overpowering sense of the futility and helplessness of art in the presence of the modern industrial situation; but unlike him, his æsthetic revolt was complicated neither by spiritual mysticism, nor by conservative instincts. It is his very simplicity of type that makes Morris so refreshing a personality among the modern social reformers. One impulse, and only one, actuated him in assuming his position of rebel; and it was enough. His work is redeemed from crudeness by his delightful interpretation of the past from his own artist-point of view; and the appeal of the Middle Ages plays even more quaintly than with Ruskin through the revolutionary passion of the avowed communist. Perhaps it is not wholly fantastic to take pleasure in the links with the past which this most modern of radicals affords us, and to be glad that the most lovely of all Morris' lovely

writings, the noble and imaginative "Dream of John Ball," carries us back to the time of Langland and to the atmosphere of the Peasants' Revolt. Few more profoundly stirring and troubling passages of social idealism have ever been vouchsafed us in prose or poetry than the wistful retrospect-prophecy in the last chapter of this little book, where the dreamer of the nineteenth century and the priest of God and freedom of the fourteenth, strangely brought together and each to the other a dream of the night, hold high converse concerning the long and weary struggle for freedom which stretches out in phase after phase through the passing generations.

"'John Ball, be of good cheer; for once more thou knowest as I know, that the Fellowship of Men shall endure, however many tribulations it may have to wear through. Look you, awhile ago was the light bright about us; but it was because of the moon, and the night was deep notwithstanding, and when the moonlight waned and died and there was but a little glimmer in place of the bright light, yet was the world glad, because all things knew that the glimmer was of day and not night. Lo, you, an image of the times, to betide of the hope of the fellowship of men. Yet forsooth it may well be that this bright day of summer which is now dawning upon us, is no image of the beginning of the day that shall be, but rather shall that day-dawn be cold and gray and surly; and yet by its light shall men see things as they verily are, and no longer enchanted by the gleam of the moon,

and the glamour of the dream-tide. By such gray light shall wise men and valiant souls see the remedy and deal with it, a real thing that may be touched and handled, and no glory of the heavens to be worshiped from afar off. And what shall it be, as I told thee before, save that men shall be determined to be free?' "

Conservative emotion enough there appeared, as a matter of course, to meet this strong rise of the tide of thought and feeling. The lingering few who still distrust democracy, and hope for the reinstatement of an aristocratic principle in society, are no more averse to socialism than the dominant many who shrink from any extension of the authority of the state, and believe that democratic individualism, however severe its results, is the ultimatum of social advance. W. H. Mallock, in his clever and able books, "Labour and the Popular Welfare," "The Classes and the Masses," and "Social Equality," may be taken as the ablest literary opponent among men of letters, of socialism from the aristocratic point of view; while Benjamin Kidd, in his "Social Evolution," was for a time, at least, the most popular representative of current scientific objections. The very earnestness of the anti-socialist animus of these writers is only another witness to the serious clearness with which the period recognizes the socialistic issue. To realize that issue, as we said in an early chapter, was the work of the last period; to face it seems to be the work of our own; to solve it is for the future.

III

Far from the battle ground of theory, that spiritual instinct of wider brotherhood which we have traced in its wistful beginnings is finding free scope at last. The majority live untouched by it, many deride it; but positive, not negative factors are the significant elements in any progress, and before the century closed earnest people were establishing a curiously untrammeled fellowship with all sorts and conditions of men. Such a fellowship means activity; eager and vigorous cooperation with the forces in the collective self making for righteousness. Yet however practical its manifestation, the governing instinct is as much contemplative as active. The mystic of former times, reacting against conventions and longing for simplicity of life, fled like Thoreau into the wilderness; the mystic of the present, actuated by the same impulse, flees not from but to the world, betakes himself, not to the woods, but to a crowded city district, and steeps his soul in the joy of the widest human sympathy he can attain. He is often misinterpreted and called a philanthropist, and the motive of compassion and service is doubtless strongly at work in promoting the new fellowship; yet deep in the heart is another impulse, a sense of need blending restlessly with the sense of power to help, and even more operative in driving men out from the conventions of class or clique into the fuller freedom. It is one of the practical outcomes of theoretical democracy

that men begin to feel that there is literally no privilege in life, on its earthly side, so great as absolutely free and unlimited relations with their fellow men, and that actual conditions make this privilege rare. People are to be found in plenty who have never held any intercourse with wage-earners except either as employers or as benefactors. Such intercourse as this is not abnormal, but it is partial; it brings into relief only certain aspects of character on either side, and these not always the best. The craving for contact of the entire man with man, for full expression and reception of personality, is a pet theory with a poet like Whitman; but it remains theory to most of his readers. To realize or gratify this craving in all the rich relations of actual life by the constant extension of fellowship into new regions is no ignoble desire.

All around us new lines of social cleavage begin to appear. They are faint as yet, and only to be discerned in just the right light; but no sympathetic eyes can mistake them. They run quite at cross-purposes to the sharp lines so uniformly noted by our early social critics. The ancient division of rank, separating the nobleman of birth from the parvenu, was already fading when Victoria ascended the throne; it seems to an outsider wholly to have vanished, during the period when the Jew Disraeli became the darling of the British aristocracy; and even Mr. Mallock may lament but cannot revive it. The new divisions so swiftly formed on commercial lines have been

on the whole as rigidly exclusive as the old; but with the great difference that the occasional lucky or clever individual could and did evade them and rise from class to class, even to the social summit. This possibility long blinded people, especially here in America, to the fact that it existed only as an exception, and that the average mass was shut off from the opportunities of privilege as completely as in a feudal régime. The curious mixture of fluctuation and rigidity which resulted from this state of things in our social conditions has been enhanced by many forces, — the natural tendency in a society founded on wealth to elaborate forms of living, the accumulation of great fortunes, all the phenomena, in short, that make the stock in trade for the denunciation of our social Jeremiahs. The satisfaction with which even the idealists long continued to contemplate our commercial society, and to shut their eyes to its defects, sprang doubtless from the persistent delusion that the application of democracy to political life was sufficient to secure justice and liberty, and fully to meet the intentions of the founders of the Republic. But the time came when the fallacy in this pleasing theory was of necessity perceived; and, in our own day, hints of new social groupings, of strange classifications, are beginning to appear.

"Organic filaments," as Carlyle felicitously called them, filaments of personal friendship, are spinning themselves among the ashes of the old régime. Each makes for that social unity which is national life, each protests by its very existence

against that separation which is death. The working-classes and the privileged are slowly, surely, drawing together; and here and there we begin to see in detail the attempt to apply democracy in its purest form to social life.

What may be the result of this quickening of knowledge and sympathy between those naturally far apart is not yet apparent. The establishment of each tie is, in any case, a small result in itself, worthy of thanksgiving. Whether, beyond this immediate good, the end of the nineteenth century saw the origin of a great movement, with a significant future, it is impossible to tell; but surmises are allowable and tempting. Looking forward, we may be fairly sure that the big world of prosperous trade and decorous society will long go on its respectable way much as at present; but apart from it and opposed to it *in toto*, we may easily imagine that we see great groups of people, bound together by personal ties and by spiritual faith, and earnestly striving after a nobler civilization. Children of privilege and children of toil will be united in these groups; thinkers and laborers; women and men of delicate traditions and fine culture, mingled in close spiritual fellowship with those whose wisdom has been gained not through opportunity, but through deprivation. They will have found a deep union in a common experience and common desire, underlying all intellectual and social difference. They will realize in a measure the old dream of Langland, — fellow-pilgrims of Truth, while they share

life and labor in joyous comradeship. And they will aim, like More, at a reshaping and regeneration of all society, shutting themselves up in no small or isolated experiment; for they will realize that the fellowship they love can never be perfected except under conditions of a literally universal freedom.

If we would look for the signs of this new fellowship, we can turn indiscriminately to fiction or to fact. It has taken the workingman a long time to gain the entrée into the world of letters; but he has arrived at last. Wordsworth was probably the first English author whose people worked with their hands for a living. Charles Lamb could not away with the Peddler as hero of the "Excursion," but that worthy held his own, along with the Leech-gatherer, the sailors, the shepherds, the reapers, — people whose character was accented by their occupation, and who could dispense with a large variety of melodramatic adventures because their time was spent in carrying on the business of life, and in gaining spiritual experience thereby. Between Wordsworth's day and ours lies a long development in the literary treatment of the producing class. To-day, to reveal this class, soul, body, and conditions, is one of the chief quests of modern romance. To feel how great a distance we have traveled, we need only try to imagine Sir Walter Scott reading "Marcella" and "Sir George Tressady." Between the two there is a constantly progressive gain in actuality. Imaginative under-

standing of the types developed among modern workers, of their interests, prejudices, aspirations, passions, deformities, and heroisms, is essential to any right judgment of the social situation. Its splendid artistic and human opportunity, fiction has discerned but slowly; it awakened to this opportunity at last; and Dickens and Kingsley seemed nearly as remote as Rousseau to a generation that read Kipling, Morison, and Hamlin Garland. Probably the very readable books of Sir Walter Besant inaugurated the modern attitude, which tries to see things as they are; but "All Sorts and Conditions of Men" and "The Children of Gibeon" seem a little old-fashioned to-day. Their studies in East London life are written with the air of an explorer in strange and unknown lands. Types are cleverly caught, but are seen only from a distance: the shop-girl's bang is better discerned than her manners, and her manners than her soul; while Angela and Valentine, the engaging heroines, are inventions of the reformer, not real girls. The books as a whole are frankly Utopian. In the years that have passed since these pleasant stories were written, the sense of actuality in fiction has deepened with amazing rapidity. Dialect stories, labor-movement stories, stories of railroad people, of cow-boys, of employees, clerks, lighthouse keepers, politicians, street-waifs, all witness to the hunger of the public for knowledge of the common life. Some of this writing is bad and cheap, but some of it is good; and the best thing about it is that, for the most part, its direct animus

is not that of the reformer, but of pure brotherly interest. Art is drawing near and telling facts where it used to stand at a distance and invent melodrama. To see how much it profits by its new attitude, how pathos, above all, gains in poignancy when it forgets itself and becomes obedient to truth, one need only compare Dickens' first social novel, "Oliver Twist," with a little later book curiously similar in subject, Arthur Morison's "Child of the Jago." Such a story, again, as Kipling's "magically accurate" study of Badalia Herodsfoot, as one who should know calls it, shows that a tradition of truth is established from which fiction would find it hard to retreat. In "Marcella," poor though the book is as a novel, we feel that the heroine and the environment are a transcript from life, not a suggestion to life, as in the stories of Besant; and the story, with its sequel, bears clear witness to the breaking down of barriers and the growth of social intercourse between the alienated classes.

In this drawing together of the privileged and the unprivileged nothing is more hopeful than that the unprivileged are finding their voice. For it would be foolish to pretend that comprehension between classes is instinctive. Barriers of wealth and rank vanish instantly to the spiritual gaze, but there are other barriers more persistent. The well-bred are practically the well-born in the modern world, and the spoken sentence places a man more surely than his clothes or his manners.

When all conventions are discarded, the fact remains that it is never easy to establish relations of full understanding between men trained only in the school of life and those trained in the school of letters. Minds do not work in the same way: moral standards are curiously different; values appear in quite a different light; prejudices and traditions are often diametrically opposed; and it sometimes seems that only a miracle can promote that sincere and serious intercourse necessary to real comradeship. There is need of every social settlement, every labor conference, every association of professional men with manual workers, to make the distance less.

The difficulty is enormously increased by the fact that the unprivileged classes are usually inarticulate. It is the weakness of all our social literature that it is written entirely from the point of view of the privileged. On the work of William Morris, on that of many a radical socialist, rests the hall-mark of refinement, and the very choiceness of its ideas and tastes is in danger of limiting its appeal to the aristocrat, and of bringing it even into the sphere of the dilettante or the amateur. In spite of the earnestness and eloquence of much of the social criticism which we have passed in review, one is instinctively sure that only the very exceptional workingman would ever read it. And yet, the cause of the spiritual democracy can never be wholly won by the movement of the rich toward the poor. There must be a corresponding movement of the poor toward the rich, and the society

of the future must be formed by the intellectual as well as the practical coöperation of all.

In the nature of the case, the self-expression of the laboring classes can never be so copious nor so complete as that of the leisure class and the well-to-do. Yet here and there the dim stirrings of life and desire, the ideals, aims, and characteristic thoughts, which distinctively belong to the vast throng of unlettered men, are making themselves known. Working-people do not speak with the polish, with the logic, nor even with the power always to say exactly the thing they mean, that might be desired. But to listen to them is more important on the whole than to air one's own theories, or even to record one's own observations. To hear one speech by a labor leader is more instructive than to read any number of brilliant studies of labor leaders made from the outside. Such speeches are nowadays often accessible, but the educated public does not appreciate the privilege of hearing them. It is curious in a busy lecture season to meditate on the symbolic audiences assembled in different parts of the same city. Here are well-dressed and critical crowds listening with mild pleasure to lectures on botany or poetry or history, or, it may be, economics; and here at the other end of the town is another audience, less well dressed, an audience close proximity to which is not always agreeable, one possessing, probably, a much larger proportion of men than that other just left; and it listens, not with critical unimpassioned enjoyment, but with tense interest, with passion, with cries of ap-

proval or wrath, as the case may be. The address delivered to this audience of the workers will in all probability be redolent of an idealism and of a wistful moral passion wholly out of the range of speaker or audience up-town; probably also, while it quickens the pulse with disinterested fervor for justice and freedom, it will lead the mind astray with reasoning pitifully false; but it is entirely certain that the tone and temper of the up-town and down-town addresses will be emanations from two different worlds, which have so strangely little in common that it is difficult to realize that they both exist within the limits of the same community.

There are, then, many reasons why intelligent and thoughtful men and women should read with especial interest a book like Robert Blatchford's "Merrie England." For the book came straight from the people; it was written for the people; and the people absorbed it by thousands. It is the most genuine self-expression of the working-classes, and can tell us most concerning their mental life of any English book in the century. Not of course that all English wage-earners agree with Blatchford's position of advanced socialism, but that the book has done what university extension and the best-intentioned efforts of the intellectual philanthropist generally fail to do: it has reached those whom it meant to reach. They have understood it, they have read it; it has therefore expressed not perhaps their views, but their minds. No one who knows intimately some of the many thinking members among the wage-earning class to-day

can fail to recognize in the method and appeal of "Merrie England," an entirely accurate reflection of their mental qualities, their strength and weakness, their differences from the ordinary citizen, differences which are sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. First, the book is morally sound, and actuated by a wholly noble passion, and a disinterested desire for social salvation and freedom such as is still too rare among those who do not live face to face with the life-results of modern industry on the worker. It is inflammatory enough, but no fair-minded person could accuse it of interested motives. Its freedom from such motives is quite characteristic of the class it represents; for we too often forget, or are not intelligent enough to recognize, that the individual workingman who is able to rise out of the ranks and make himself felt as a power by his speaking or writing has usually, so far as personal considerations go, nothing to gain and everything to lose by agitation. He represents the exceptional man, who is little likely to suffer in times of industrial stress; and he might, in all probability, lift himself away from his class if he liked, with more gain and ease than he will have in becoming its self-appointed spokesman. The next thing that arrests attention in Blatchford's book is its shrewd common sense, not only assumed, but real; the fullness of detail, the minute and ready practical knowledge of actual industrial life, which enriches it and gives it the convincing tone that it certainly possesses. And then, as we read on, we find that

the reasoning powers of the author are simply those of the child; that the book is riddled by fallacies from cover to cover; that it jumps with no transition from the smallest of concrete facts to the most sweeping of abstract conclusions; in a word, that it is the product of an untrained mind.

But unless we are intellectual snobs of the first water, we shall not at this point dismiss the book as simply worthless and pernicious. We shall rather return to our first impression; and we shall find in its indomitable idealism, in its resolute love of man and freedom, in its sturdy knowledge of the working-people, and its ringing call to high social faith and action, elements as valuable to the common thought as those which the most cautious and accurate scholar could contribute. We shall recognize that large intuitions and keen experience have their place after all, and are factors only less important than sound reasoning in the formation of social ideals; and we shall feel convinced, accepting the book as typical of the class for which it was written, that the workers, despite their "prejudices" so complementary to our own, and despite their difficulties in straight reasoning and economic analysis, have yet something of quite incalculable value to contribute to the dynamics of the social movement. It is perhaps through them that idealism, long hovering in exile, half-spurned, half-desired by a generation of anxious and timid thinkers, will once more be summoned among us, and that there may be born again, in a decadent and weary society, the healthful spirit of the little child.

IV

Democracy, which entered England hand in hand with Christianity, has become strangely separated from its companion during its long wanderings. The relation between the two was still close in Langland; in More, it had become chiefly theoretical; in the century of Swift, it had ceased to exist. At this time, however, both democracy and Christianity were sleeping. During the nineteenth century, the two powers have been groping each for the other, hampered and well-nigh helpless on account of their separation, yet not knowing what they lacked.

Democracy was, as we have seen, the first to awaken. The social revival came from a source without the Church, and for a long time in seeming opposition to it. Doubtless, the radical movement owed far more than its promoters realized to Christian influence. It is easy to see that none of the social literature of any European country could have been produced except from a civilization steeped for ages in Christianity. The progressive thought of England, unlike that of the Continent, has rarely been anti-Christian, and it is easy to recognize the Christian spirit in all our writers, whether in the wistful gentleness of Thackeray, the abounding sentiment of Dickens, the moral depth of George Eliot, or the ethical bias which none of our speculative thinkers can escape. But if the thought we have passed in review has not been anti-Christian, it has been for the most

part un-Christian. Ruskin alone among the critics deliberately invokes Christianity as a social authority still possibly in force in some quarters, and shapes his theories on avowedly Christian, though wholly non-dogmatic, lines. It is in the name of natural justice, common sense, and reason, not in the name of any revealed law of human conduct or relationships, that the strongest appeals of our social literature are made. From the time of the revolutionary poets, social passion in England is shy, silent, or indifferent, when it is not scornful, in the presence of organized Christianity.

But this state of things could not continue, so long as the burning words of the Gospels were not blotted out from the New Testament daily read in the churches, and so long as the facts of the supreme Life of all history remained the great inheritance of the world. To trace the social awakening of the modern Church is to read one of the most interesting chapters of religious experience.

The spiritual depths were stirred first. For the social impulse in the Church is always effect and not cause of her deepest life. It has sometimes appeared logical and desirable to try to initiate a quickening of her stagnant powers by a purely humanitarian enthusiasm, but the attempt has never succeeded; for some reason, that is not the way her experience works. The Oxford Movement, which men of all schools and parties now recognize as the turn of the tide in the religious life of modern England, was wholly bent on other than social aims. Its eyes were fixed on the primitive and mediæval

Church rather than on the world of its own day. It was in many respects like the Puritans of whom it so strongly disapproved, so bent on saving souls, and on formulating theology, that no energy was left it for consideration of the collective life which surrounded it; and indeed, it was too much afraid of the world to scrutinize her ways.

Yet the Catholic reaction held latent factors of high importance in the social revival. We might not appreciate those factors even to-day, if the later history of the reaction were not bringing them out constantly into dramatic relief. But, looking back in the light of the striking social development in its recent phases, we can clearly see that it carried with it social implications of the most radical order. In its own way, it was pervaded from the first by that sense of the organic unity of human life which was struggling all through this period to assert itself against the disintegrating instincts that were dominating popular thought. The organism of which the Oxford leaders were supremely conscious was indeed not society at large, but the Catholic Church; yet that Church was dear to them only as the ideal expression of the human race, the Fellowship which realized the will of God for all his children. Their belief in a Church visible, a mighty association of men, actuated by unworldly motives, and avowedly indifferent to fleshly good, had a deep social impressiveness. In that reaction against "Liberalism," which Arnold noted as the distinctive battle so valiantly waged by Newman and his comrades, we have simply a fresh phase of

the general revolt of which we have already followed so many other aspects. And the longing for coherence, for unity, for authority, which we have found so potently at work in the thought of all men of the future, was the chief intellectual feature of the Oxford Movement.

Yet even more striking in its social implication was the personal attitude which the movement diffused. It brought unworldliness back from a sentiment to a practice. Against luxury, self-indulgence, and ease it set its face like a flint. The beautiful sermons of Newman, so suave, so severe, with their inveterate hatred of the "gentlemanlike," the "comfortable," and the "established," and their marvelous gift of revealing the eternal facts below the temporal, did an incalculable work in restoring to their readers and hearers the sense of the reality underlying convention. He who eagerly yielded his soul to the spirit of the movement soon found himself like his leader, aware of "two, and two only, absolute and luminously self-evident beings, himself and his Creator." The world and the lust thereof receded into the distance, and consciousness was filled by the austerity of the Christian claim, and the duty of renunciation. This renunciation was, it is true, simply to the end of the attainment of personal holiness. It was inspired by no wish to share earthly goods with others, or to minister to the hungry, but only by the wish to escape the taint of the evil world. Yet to introduce in a lusty commercial civilization any motive strong enough to turn throngs of people from comfort and luxury

to a life of stern self-denial was assuredly to do a great and salutary thing. The moral sternness of the teachings of all the leaders of the Oxford Movement was one of the few bracing influences of the period in which they worked. No one can read such a sermon as that of Newman "On the Danger of Riches," without feeling that the thought there expressed, while very far from that of our own day, yet held our thought in its germ. Last but greatest of the social influences of the movement was that sacramental conception of life which it sought so solemnly to revive in the Anglican Church. Associated at times in its origin with a dreamy asceticism which shut off its votaries from healthful relations with the world, this conception yet held in its depths an imperative craving for the sanctification of the flesh and of all human life, and fostered an attitude wholly different from that of the Puritan, who would immerse himself in spiritual concerns and allow the visible universe to go as rapidly as possible on its foreordained way of destruction.

The Oxford Movement was, then, full of latent social suggestions. But it had a work to do more obvious and compelling than any effort after social regeneration. Its stormy history of religious struggle, its impassioned absorption in the attempt to establish a new theological and ecclesiastical attitude in the Anglican Church, obscured for a long time its social implications. In a way, its more superficial and temporary interests were for many years most in evidence; and we cannot find sur-

prising, though we must find lamentable, the utter inability of Carlyle and men of his school to see in the whole movement anything higher than a pathetic but on the whole absurd effort to revive dead forms for their own poor sake.

Only a little later, the distinctly social conscience of the Church stirred and awoke, and the words Christian Socialism, sounding a combination wholly preposterous to the ears of that generation, were first heard. They were spoken under the stimulus of the pathetic failure of the Chartist movement of '33 to '48. Chartism was the first revolt on the part of the workers to reach the consciousness of the educated classes; and though it missed its direct aims, its reaction on public sentiment, especially in the Church, was most useful. Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley, the men who felt it most keenly, were thrilled through and through by the awful discovery which it brought home to them of unrighteousness and injustice in a Christian nation. They were not men of as much charm and grace in literary expression as the kindred group across the Channel, — Lamennais, Lacordaire, and Montalembert, who were fighting the cause of social freedom in the Gallican Church; but they were free from the sentimentality of these delightful French idealists. Maurice was a profound thinker and a saint; Kingsley, an ardent fighter and a versatile and pleasant novelist. Together, with a few comrades — Thomas Hughes, J. M. Ludlow — who rallied around them, they took a noteworthy

stand. They announced for the first time in modern years the responsibility of Christianity toward the practical conditions of the world in which it found itself.

The Christian Socialism of Kingsley and Maurice was both more and less than its name implied. It did not even perceive, far less grasp, the economic doctrine which the word Socialism to-day carries. The founders of the movement were stanch monarchists and aristocrats. Yet spiritually they rested on a principle deeper and more radical than that which ordinary socialism has discovered: the principle that the brotherhood of man is an absolute reality, springing from the fatherhood of God. This principle underlay all the profound theology of Maurice. It was the clue to that large comprehensiveness of sympathy which distinguished him among all men of his day, and which was as operative in the region of clashing social theories as in that of spiritual quests. The enunciation of that principle had not become a truism in those days nor sunk into cant. It led at once, with the strong men possessed by it, to very radical inferences, both in theory and practice. The theory may still be read to much advantage by this generation in the noble sermons and commentaries of Maurice, in the novels of Kingsley, and best, perhaps, in the stirring correspondence between the two men during the active days of the movement. Their teaching had much in common with that of Ruskin, who was brought in contact with them through his work in the Workingmen's College founded by Maurice;

but of course it rested more boldly on a foundation of not only ethical but dogmatic Christianity. It was all a plea for the permeation of society, in its every activity and relation, by the law of Christian love. It had as keen a sense of the reality of the unseen as had the thought of Newman, but it had a keener sense of the reality and importance of the seen; and the world was to it less a foe to be overcome than a kingdom to be redeemed. The practical attempts of the movement to apply its ideals to fact were not on a large scale, but they were, for that time, most significant. A definite campaign against sweat-shops on the part of clergymen was quite a new thing, and so was the effort to establish coöperative industries. The Christian socialists also were the first people of education unobtrusively to seek personal relations with wage-earners: Mr. J. M. Ludlow, Maurice's friend, believed that he was the first gentleman in England to invite a workingman to tea. It would be hard to say whether their contemporaries were more scandalized by the theories or by the practice of these devoted pioneers; but the wrath and persecution excited, both in and out of their own communion, by a position which seems to us to-day very moderate and modest suggests the work which has at least been accomplished in accustoming thought to advanced social ideas, even if slight advance in action can be claimed, during the last fifty years.

It is not easy to say why the social impulse, so strong in 1848, seemed before long practically to die

out from the Church. Perhaps it had been premature. Perhaps the spiritual tide had not yet risen sufficiently high to sustain it. It is certainly true that the ideas of Maurice worked through diffusion, not, like those of Newman, through concentration, and so took longer to make their way. Whatever the cause, the Church from 1850 to 1880 shared in the general ebb-tide of social interest and feeling against which Carlyle, and later Ruskin, was struggling almost alone. She did not, however, sink back to her old level of universal stagnation; and her deepening spiritual earnestness gave evidence of an abundant life that was sure to express itself in unforeseen ways when the time should be ripe.

The new social awakening came, as we have seen, in the secular world during the fertile period after 1880. And shame on shame indeed would it have been had the Church again held back, when that secular world, critical, artistic, practical, was all opening its eyes to see, its heart to feel, its hands to act. She did not hold back; she followed, if she could not lead; and this time, the impulse astir within her was a larger, fuller, deeper thing than it had ever been before. For it has been no affair of a party, or of a few solitary individuals. The desire to understand and to practice the social truths innate in Christianity is moving, in every religious communion, toward results which we cannot yet see. Who shall say, indeed, how potent is the influence of the profound radicalism of the Spirit of Christ, with its penetrating appeal to utter unworldliness, to the perfect love which is perfect

service, even on the throngs, remote from any Church connection, who are sensitive to a quickening power? Even the most atheistic of socialists, even the many people who hold their religious and their social radicalism as inevitable parts of one attitude, yet feel and constantly say that Christ is Leader in their fellowship, and invoke the Gospels while they scoff at the Church. It is difficult, it is impossible, to define or describe a tendency of which we are all the disciples; but so much it is safe to say, — that with the intellectual impulse toward the reconstruction of social theory, and the practical impulse toward the activity of social service, is blending more and more a spiritual impulse deeper than either of these, imperatively desiring and seeking the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth.

All around us, we can see in the religious world two tendencies rushing together: one is that intuition of the large misery of the disinherited, and their appeal for help, that great compassion, of which we have watched the beginnings; and the other is the stern religious desire for the subordination of earthly passion and of personal earthly joys. Either of these tendencies is imperfect alone. The purely humanitarian inspiration of the first too often, as experience shows, proves unstable. The purely ascetic inspiration of the other makes too often for self-centred morbidness and sterile spiritual pride. United, they become a power. Silently, unobtrusively, in many a crowded centre of wretched, suffering, sinning humanity, men and

women, clergy and laity, swayed by the double force of these two impulses, are bearing their devoted witness, and finding the world well lost for the privilege of following directly in the steps of their Master. Sometimes, to these two inspirations from above and from around is added that intellectual desire to know, that enthusiasm for understanding, for interpreting our modern situation, which we have seen developing, quite apart from sentiment, all through the modern years. When this inspiration comes to supplement the other inspirations, human and religious, the resultant type is strong indeed. For then it is clearly seen that not rescue work alone, not alone the task of binding up the broken-hearted and the broken-bodied, is incumbent upon Christianity; but that the religion of Christ must undertake constructive work as well, and, however it shrink from the strenuous and perplexing labor, must find the way to help society to realize higher, purer, juster conditions than have yet been known, and to translate into fact the petitions of the divine prayer: "Thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done, on earth."

In the very nature of the case, a movement such as is springing up in modern Christianity cannot find much literary expression. Newman, Maurice, Kingsley, the protagonists of the spiritual life in modern England, are also notable figures in English letters. The more practical claims of our own day call more exclusively for eloquence of deeds; and the literary accompaniment of the social passion in the modern Church will probably be as

incidental as the fragments of expression which have been bequeathed to us by the Franciscan movement. Yet St. Francis' Canticle of the Sun is as precious a possession to poetry as it is to religion; and in like manner, some of the utterances of the new perception of Christian duty, dated from the close of the century, are full of that sincerity of feeling, that incisive courage, that undertone of pleading, which make writing beautiful as well as true. There are sermons by Canon Gore and Canon Scott Holland, there are phrases and paragraphs in the tracts of the society which had done most to foster the social principle in the English Church, The Christian Social Union, which linger in the memory with the noblest words of Ruskin: —

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday to-day and forever. The claim which He made on the contemporaries of his life on earth is the claim which He makes on his disciples to-day. Many will come to Him at the last day — so we cannot but paraphrase his own words — with manifold pleas and excuse derived from the maxims of what is called the Christian world: 'Lord, we never denied the Christian creed; nay, we had a zeal for orthodoxy, for churchmanship, for Bible distribution, but of course in our business we did as every one else did: we sold in the dearest and bought in the cheapest market; we did not, of course we did not, entertain any other consideration when we were investing our money, except whether the investments were safe; we never imagined that we could love our neighbors as ourselves in the competition

of business, or that we could carry into commercial transactions the sort of strict righteousness that we knew to be obligatory in private life. Lord, in all these matters we went by commonly accepted standards; we never thought much about Christianity as a brotherhood.' Then will He protest unto them; 'Did I not say to thee, in that written word wherein thou didst profess to have eternal life: A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth? Did not I warn thee: How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God? Did I not bid thee seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Did I not tell thee that except a man in spirit and will, at least, forsook all that he had, unless he took up his cross and followed Me, he could not be my disciple? Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth, that hath done, the Will of my Father.'

"Brethren, you may depend upon it, that you cannot be Christians by mere tradition or mere respectability. You will have to choose to be Christians."[1]

In words like these, we hear the echo of the old cry of Langland, but enlightened and assured. Put them beside the utterances of eighteenth century divinity, and it is impossible to deny that a great change, a great revival, was passing over the Church. Christianity cannot claim to have

[1] Charles Gore, "The Incarnation of the Son of God," *Bampton Lectures*, 1891.

inaugurated the modern movement for social salvation. For a long time its professors retarded that movement, and religious thought has taken well-nigh a century to awaken to the real situation. Yet however slow has been the awakening of the Church, in the grace of God there lies another opportunity before her. She is taking her place at last. No one, looking at the world to-day, can fail to see that the social energy of Christians in every communion, and indeed quite apart from the visible Church, is as notable a factor in the situation as the crystallizing of the intellectual issue around the socialist position, or the practical growth of a new fellowship, disregarding class lines. Doubtless there will continue to be many people who claim the consolations without sharing the sacrifices of Christianity; doubtless the great world will proceed on its selfish way. Yet perhaps it is no dream that the long separation between democracy and Christianity draws to a close, and that as the slow years pass by, the love of God and man may find, in their sacramental union, freedom for more perfect collective expression than has ever yet been seen on earth.

# CONCLUSION: TWENTIETH CENTURY

## I

THE twentieth century has run near a quarter of its course, and a great convulsion lies behind us. The new world in which we move is mysterious, challenging, affrighting. We understand it ill; but some clues to its meaning may be found in the outwardly peaceful years which immediately preceded the Great War. The salient authors of those years are for the most part still living and writing; but we cannot here discuss their later work. Our present business is with the literature charged with social interest between 1890 and 1914.

The first striking fact about it from the social point of view is its honesty. People are not afraid to speak out; their minds are increasingly free from convention. Many assumptions prevailed in the Victorian age. Parliamentary government seemed as solid as the oaks of England; the Family was the sacredly unchallenged basis of society (Thackeray in the preface to "Pendennis" defended himself for having decorously shown his hero resisting temptation to an intrigue); the Church, if sharply satirized, seemed secure. Of course, reforms were urged; and from the time democracy was born, when compassion and a sense of power rose together in men's hearts, social idealism had tried to be at close grip with reality. But behind the discontent and radicalism of the Victorian age were a number of solid institutions which could be criticized only half apologetically. Some of these institutions look less

solid to-day, and the people who accept them are often the ones to apologize.

The most unquestioned assumption of the later nineteenth century was the assumption of progress; this was the vaunted contribution of evolutionary science to social thought. Now, keen thinkers, like Dean Inge of St. Paul's, deny it; and we are forced to grant that evolutionary science teaches nothing of the kind. Perpetual change it teaches; but change is one thing, progress quite another. It is easier than in the Middle Ages, to believe that social institutions are unstable, so conservatism is robbed of one support; but we can no longer lay the flattering unction to our souls that change inevitably or even naturally means advance; it is just as likely to mean decay.

To see how increasingly drastic and fundamental social criticism becomes, let us compare Dickens with Galsworthy. Dickens in "Little Dorrit" arraigned imprisonment for debt, and in "Bleak House" gave a powerful and elaborated picture of "the law's delays." Galsworthy needs only one short play, his "Justice," to strike at the root of our whole judicial and penal system. Dickens in "Hard Times" showed crudely and in grotesque caricature the evil effects of limitless competition and the harsh doctrines of the Manchester school. Galsworthy's "Strife" depicts with studied moderation and relentless psychology the ultimate tragedy by which representatives of capital and labor destroy themselves in fruitless conflict. Dickens dwelt, sometimes with almost maudlin sentimen-

tality, on the joys of the home. Domestic life, as presented in the records of the Forsyte family, is hardly a sheltered idyll when described by Galsworthy's bitter pen.

It is still as possible as ever to believe in the ancient sanctities; but one has to give a reason now for the faith that is in one. Contemporary literature has a sharp scalpel for dissecting fallacies, and never a comfortable illusion is left to the reader of Bernard Shaw.

Many people may feel depressed by the suggestion that all which is reached at the end of the long sequence of social idealists in English letters is a multiplication of unsettling questions. Yet would we have things otherwise? A more intimate contact with reality is in itself some gain to the brave; and in proportion as the institutions and traditions of this world forfeit our confidence, we may be forced to fall back more surely on the eternal, and may draw thence new strength and power to remould the things of time.

There is one hopeful sign; social interest has permeated every form of literature; thought and art are saturated with it. The dramatic revival, as seen in the plays of every season, derives its chief vitality, and its main intellectual appeal, from social problems. The novel, too, is a flexible instrument of social ideas: sometimes, as in the case of H. G. Wells, the ideas take the lead and select the people to illustrate them; sometimes, as with Arnold Bennett, the people bother the novelist, and stir in his brain till he has to let them out, incidentally

showing the social tangle in which their lives are caught. The essay feels similar impulses. One can watch the ebb and flow of popular interests by classifying magazine articles; during the quarter century before the war, articles on social lines gained steadily on those dealing with science and religion. Magazine articles are not always literature; but now and then, as in the work of Lowes Dickinson, A.E., and Bertrand Russell, they are kindled with divine fire and glow with the beauty and charm of a personal revelation.

II

The social critic of our period whose name will occur first to every one is George Bernard Shaw; and two people out of three will think first of his plays. For he is the outstanding author of that new drama which social passion has adopted as its freshest vehicle. But Shaw has written novels and essays as well as plays, and his scintillating dramatic work cannot be rightly understood except in the light of his reflective prose. Shaw's essays are admirable.

Shaw is a socialist, last as first. He never abandons the early convictions which underlie the "Fabian Essays." But he is no blind adherent and no narrow doctrinaire. He not only repudiates the materialistic Marxian socialism which William Morris managed to square with his æsthetic idealism; he upsets ruthlessly the sentimental formulæ in which most socialists cradle their minds. For no one is more hopelessly romantic than the average

socialist; and "the tragi-comic conflict between real life and the romantic imagination" is the "leit-motif" of all Shaw's writing.

His novels "The Irrational Knot," "Love among the Artists," "An Unsocial Socialist," "Cashel Byron's Profession" are early, almost prentice, work.

Nor could one stress the first play much if it stood alone. "Widowers' Houses" — copyright, 1898 — started out to be a socialist tract, and never quite escaped. So far as art goes, it is pure farce. Shaw is of the tribe of Ben, not the tribe of Shakespeare, and he might have borrowed Ben's title, "Every Man in His Humour." Still, the play is good reading. The hero, Trench, who might be the usual "jeune premier," has decent standards. He recoils from taking the money of the girl he wants to marry when he finds that it comes from slum property; but he discovers bye and bye that his own income derives indirectly from the same source — and, like most men in such predicaments, he gives up the game and acquiesces. If the play does escape being a tract, it is because light falls less on the problem than on the persons — the characters whose lives are determined willy-nilly by the setting of sinister circumstance. Shaw has a plain moral. Radicals who shrink from sharing the profits of a bad system are frustrated in their efforts to withdraw; he wishes us to infer that those who devote themselves to sawing off the branch on which they are comfortably perched are in a position more honorable however precarious. Personal behavior

is helpless to redeem the situation, and there is nothing for it but to dedicate ourselves to the overthrow of the whole wretched system. This is really the chief conclusion of all his social drama, taken *en masse*.

But already Shaw has outgrown his early hope that a violent and sudden revolution might set us free from our prison. The bitter sadness which in this play as later shoots through his fun, springs from the fact that he sees people pretty generally impaled on a dilemma: unable, if they are high-minded, to tolerate conditions from which none the less no swift or sudden release is to be expected. All the young socialists of the eighties had really expected the revolution; William Morris's noble romance, "John Ball," registers the exact moment when that childish expectation yielded to the sad recognition that the vision of a new world must still tarry, and that to wait for it in patience was the stern lesson of slow-moving history. Shaw waits, but not in patience. A vibrating page in the "Fabian Essays" conveys his sober attitude, and suggests the spirit in which his dramas should be read:

> Let me in conclusion disavow all admiration for the inevitable, but sordid, slow, reluctant, cowardly path to justice. . . . The right is so clear, the wrong so intolerable, the gospel so convincing, that it seems to them that it must be possible to enlist the whole body of workers — soldiers, policemen, and all — under the banner of brotherhood and equality, and at one great stroke to set Justice on her rightful throne. Unfortunately such an army of light is no more to be gathered from the human product of nineteenth century civilization than grapes are to be gathered from thistles. But if we feel glad of that impos-

sibility; if we feel relieved that the change is to be slow enough to avert personal risk to ourselves; if we feel anything less than acute disappointment and bitter humiliation at the discovery that there is yet between us and the promised land a wilderness in which many must perish miserably by want and despair, — then I submit to you that our institutions have corrupted us to the most dastardly degree of selfishness.

Radical plays followed each other in quick succession during the first decade of the present century. How light the touch in them, how increasingly deft! "The Devil's Disciple," showing how the unconventional man can be betrayed, rather to his disgust, into quite conventional heroism; "Arms and the Man," discrediting militarism with inimitable keenness through its matter-of-fact soldier; "Candida," with its merry, frank, and not unkindly treatment of marriage; "Mrs. Warren's Profession," raising in its most shocking form the old problem of "Widowers' Houses"; "John Bull's Other Island," an amazing study in racial psychology, which Englishmen applauded and Irishmen puzzled over; "Man and Superman," with the Revolutionists' very arresting Handbook; and "Major Barbara," cutting deeper perhaps than any of the others into our essential perplexities, just because it introduces very seriously the forces of love and vision that should make for effective salvation if they were not inhibited by the same old Mammon — all these plays have taken a firm, and we may dare to predict a permanent, place in English comedy. They are increasingly human as Shaw goes on writing. The problems are always present,

but they are more subtly conceived; they continue to recede, while the people come more and more to the front — distracted by the problems and it must be confessed usually worsted by them; for truth to tell, the people ARE the problems, products of a system, and perpetuating the curse into which they are born.

Contrary to the general impression, it may be contended that Shaw has given us some very lovable characters. He has not confined himself to mean types as his predecessor Jonson did; he has chosen our best; and there are no villains in his plays. The men are usually soft-hearted, if often soft-headed also; even the most sardonic, the most intelligent, the most rebellious, wear their defiance as a humorous mask to conceal their emotional failings. And the women — well, not so much can be said for them, for Shaw sees them predatory, he sees them uncreative; in a word, he sees them as the masculine mind is always prone to see women, when it has fled the chivalric illusion. But he may be forgiven much for the sake of Candida, one of the most sympathetic among modern women, and of Barbara, whose name her lover is quite justified in considering as equivalent to the Greek for loveliness. In "Major Barbara," indeed, there are three really delightful people: Barbara herself; Undershaft, the portly Mephisto, who turns out after the fashion of his kind to be an agent of the Lord after all; and Cusins, the "Euripidean Republican," who perhaps comes as close as any character in Shaw to striking a positive solution.

But we can love the people more than we admire them, and we cannot love the system, in which they are all helplessly involved. The plays attract prefaces, portentously long; possibly these pungent essays may prove to have as much vitality as the plays themselves in the long run, as has happened in the case of Dryden. Taking them with the plays, we find a very serious Shaw; a Shaw whose quarrel with civilization goes far deeper than the mere socialist indictment. He sees life more broadly than any ISM can reveal; he analyzes it more keenly; and as we read on, his conviction imparts itself to us that the trouble with human arrangements proceeds from human nature. Better laugh than cry about the mess which we have made for ourselves, thinks Shaw. "My way of joking is to tell the truth," says Father Keenan: "It's the funniest joke in the world" — If we laugh ourselves into facing the truth, shall we be able to escape our intertwined dishonesties some day? Has humanity power to retrieve itself and to redeem? We are left with the question.

"Back to Methuselah," which appears while this appendix is writing, shows Shaw indomitably optimistic about human possibilities, but hopeless about our power of realizing them as life grows more and more intricate, within the limits of our mortal span. We have not time enough — but if only we could live three hundred years! —

There is a mystic vein in him, witness Captain Brassbound, Blanco Posnet, and Keenan; but spiritual interpretations are not his *métier*. And con-

cerning this earth and our social future he is not particularly reassuring. Perhaps he is not quite fair to our poor old world. He might without violating fact introduce into his pictures of life a little more disinterested affection. "Run away, now, darling," is not, though he says it is, the habitual private attitude of mothers: even during the Great War, not every Ferrovius reverted to the worship of Mars. Yet Shaw's basic contention is sound; Major Barbara learned it in her bad hour. You cannot release the higher powers of human nature, you cannot make men religious, till poverty is destroyed; till you have a civilization free from hunger to work on. Till then, the motives of converts will be mixed, the worst incentives will play uninhibited on helpless humanity; religion itself, sustained in its activities by Bodger and Undershaft, will be suspect and tainted. As well accept the situation, as Barbara and Cusins did. Perhaps religion and intellect, revolutionary ardor and spiritual passion, when united, can best further their ideals, not by fighting the existing order directly but by working within it, toward its ultimate destruction.

From "Widowers' Houses" to "Heartbreak House," Shaw uses every resource of his honest wit to disgust us with civilization; and he succeeds. At the same time, one is conscious throughout his plays of his impassioned and religious faith in life. For Shaw is as much at odds with the scientific materialism current in his youth as he is with orthodoxy. His "Life-Force" works through our blunders, our foibles, our failures, our ineptitudes;

beneficent as irresistible. And he is also capable of pointing out with ironic, salutary intensity, as in the noteworthy Preface to "Androcles and the Lion," the actual implications and the marvellous appeal, of Christian ethics. His own ethic is Christian ingrain, whether he knows it or not. A group of social-minded Christians requested Mr. Shaw to write a message to the Church in America. He declined, replying, "I feel highly flattered that you should think the Church will listen to Bernard Shaw when it refuses to listen to Jesus Christ." But certainly, no writings of the last quarter century are more likely to send thoughtful Christians back to ponder the teachings of Jesus Christ, than those of Shaw. When all is said, he is on the side of the angels. The Church is beginning to find this out. Sermons are not infrequently preached nowadays with Shaw's plays as a text. This is a very hopeful sign.

If the Church goes to school to the drama, the drama now often borrows from the Church. Acted parables become popular, and there is a tendency in such plays to lift social irony into spiritual mysticism. Among dramas of this type, a high rank may easily be assigned to the beautiful work of Charles Rann Kennedy. "The Fool from the Hills," with its haunting refrain, "Bread! Bread! Bread for all the world!" is instinct in every line with meaning, and with faith in the Christian revolution. But it is the simpler yet searching "Servant in the House" which holds the general heart. In this play, the foundations under the Church are

foul; but they can be cleansed; and at the end, inspired by Him Who is servant and Brother to us all, the Church throws off its official toggery and joins with brother Labor in the task; while institutional religion, blind and doddering, is routed in disgust.

III

Stark honesty was not a discovery of the *fin de siècle*. There were strong men before Agamemnon. One Victorian author probed convention as deeply as Shaw, and looked as straight at life; but very few people paid any attention to him. That author was Samuel Butler; and mention of him belongs here rather than in the body of this book, because it is only now that he has found his public and become an influence. Perhaps he would still be obscure, had Bernard Shaw not proclaimed enthusiastically his own debt to him. Be that as it may, the public now eagerly absorbs belated editions of his books, even to his private notebooks, and savors his quality. The work by which he will probably live longest is his "Way of All Flesh," a caustic, challenging novel. Butler has ironic genius of a high order; neither Shaw nor Galsworthy ever exposed more mercilessly the shams in the domestic and religious standards of the Victorian age. But it is no wonder that a generation which liked Charlotte Yonge's "Pillars of the House" ignored him. Sombre melancholy wittily presented is more acceptable in our day than in his.

Butler, however, like Shaw, had his ideals. They appear partly in negative ways. He was violently

opposed to the pseudo-scientific materialism into which evolutionary theory had betrayed shallow minds. He wrote a grim fantasia which foresaw Machinery as a sort of Frankenstein devouring man, its creator. Our own time recognizes the force in his ideas; Arthur Pound's articles in "The Atlantic Monthly" of 1921–'22 on "The Iron Man" sound like an expansion of them based on practical observation. Butler wrote a Utopia also; his "Erewhon" belongs to an interesting Utopian group produced toward the last of the century. Morris's "News from Nowhere" was among the first of these books; Hudson's exquisite dream-romance, of pastoral anarchy, "The Crystal Age," is another; Marshall's absurd "Upsidonia," and our own Howells's "Traveller from Altruria" may be mentioned; and Wells's "Modern Utopia," a serious book to be discussed later, might close the series. Utopias are likely to appear in epochs of expansion, when, to quote Matthew Arnold, "the iron force of adherence to an old régime has wonderfully yielded"; and this group may well be compared with that other group, produced during the Renascence, which started with Sir Thomas More's "Utopia" and included Campanella's "City of the Sun" and Bacon's "New Atlantis."

It would appear at first thought that H. G. Wells had been less loyal than Shaw to his early convictions. As Chesterton says, you can lie awake at night and hear him grow. He sometimes speaks as if his socialism had been a phase which he repudiates instead of a belief within which his mind ex-

pands; and his stormy connection with the Fabian Society was severed in 1908, after a membership of five years. But labels do not matter much. Shaw and Wells share the tendency of most brave thinkers. Opinions are in their youth of extreme importance. But as they go on, they are increasingly aware of the overwhelming complexity of life, and of the disconcerting surprises offered by human nature, and presently they find the most appealing thing to be the study not of theories but of people. To the great advantage of their art, they perceive that character, or, to use an old-fashioned term, that spiritual values, are of chief importance, and that society must be judged by its power to train and emancipate personality.

Wells is as clear as Shaw that by this criterion modern civilization is a failure. But he is more and more occupied with speculation about the human instruments by which the more orderly and kinder world of his desires can be furthered, and less concerned with formal movements or definite arrangements looking to this end. He cares less for economics, more for psychology.

Both men as they grow older change their emphasis from sociology to religion. Shaw advances from "Widowers' Houses" to "Back to Methuselah," Wells leaves behind his "Misery of Boots" and meditates on "God the Invisible King."

But Wells's religious writings, and his later studies in history, fall outside our scope. On the other hand, his most vital social books come within our period. "Anticipations," "Mankind in the Mak-

ing," "A Modern Utopia," "The Future in America," "First and Last Things," "This Misery of Boots," "New Worlds for Old," all appeared within the first decade of the twentieth century. It is convenient to classify his work under three periods: the prentice years from 1895 to 1901, when he is fascinated by scientific possibilities, and is writing fantastic romances like "The Time Machine" or "The Island of Dr. Moreau"; the social decade, when economics and ethics come to the fore, and the war and post-war period, when he takes a wider range. There is fiction in each of these periods, and no one interested in his social thinking can afford to ignore such allegorical romances as "The Sleeper Wakes," or "In the Days of the Comet," or such novels as "The Research Magnificent," "The New Machiavelli," or "The World Set Free." In the books of his social decade, Wells said his say on social lines; and although he has broken his connection with the organization which perhaps stimulated the writing, he has never repudiated the books. Nor could he; for the informing ideas of them persist in all his later thought.

Wells talks of "My anticipatory habit," and his titles, even, prove that he likes to look forward. "Anticipations," "Mankind in the Making," "New Worlds for Old," "The Future in America" — these are all prophetic. Arnold liked in his titles to present an unusual juxtaposition of ideas ("Culture and Anarchy," "Literature and Dogma"); Ruskin implied moral principles in metaphors ("Sesame and Lilies," "Time and Tide," "Fors Clavi-

gera"). Wells wants to draw the mind on, to expand it, to quicken it with purpose, to invigorate it with hope. There is plenty of indictment in his books; no more telling analysis of our absurdities was ever written than his Fabian tract, "This Misery of Boots." All his writings breathe revolt against this disorderly and disordered world. But this indictment is only a background for an outlook determinedly sanguine. Wells stands in a sordid field, but he looks off to far, clean, alluring landscapes.

Van Wyck Brooks, in a clever monograph, claims that Wells is very like the Victorian critic just mentioned; he compares Wells to Arnold. And it is true that the attack of the two men on life has similar points. Wells is not much concerned about beauty; what he likes is a good machine, shining, ingenious, efficient. He is only normally troubled by cruelty and moral evils. But he hates waste and he hates stupidity. His protagonist is the Intelligence. Sometimes he calls it Goodwill, but the Goodwill he means is not composed of pleasant intentions; it is enlightened and active, competent to carry the race on to a reasonable goal. And he like Arnold never ceases to hold his "anticipatory habit of mind." In his articles on the Washington Conference, we find him saying:

> But I know that I believe so firmly in this great World at Peace that lies so close to our own, ready to come into being as our wills turn toward it, that I must needs go about this present world of disorder and darkness like an exile doing such feeble things as I can towards the world

of my desire, now hopefully now bitterly as the moods may happen before I die.

Wells's Goodwill knows a great deal about engineering. Butler, we were saying lately, saw machines as a sinister Frankenstein, ready to destroy us; Wells sees them as the triumphant savior of humanity. Not that he wishes a mechanical civilization; the spirit of the living creature must be in his wheels, and he looks forward to a society that shall be fine, sensitive, and free. Yet it must be confessed that even in his ultimate conception of an ideal state, or life, one misses something — something conveyed by Ruskin, conveyed by Arnold, that can perhaps not be furnished by an education in Polytechnics.

But it is pleasing to have a man who knows commercial life, repudiate so vigorously the old idea that profit is a necessary incentive to industry. Any one obsessed by this ancient and tough delusion cannot do better than read the admirable chapter on "The Spirit of Gain and the Spirit of Service" in "New Worlds for Old." Here Wells points out forcibly how much of the world's most important work is done under quite other stimuli, and writes with vibrant energy in his effort to magnetize us into furthering the good and possible day when a reasonable organization of life on a basis of security for all shall eliminate our dull insistence that only the need of preserving ourselves and our families from starvation will save us from being lazy.

"Discipline" and "Order" are Wells's great words. It is a pity that in his novels people so

often make shipwreck by rejecting them, and indulge their desires defiantly, even at cost of their serviceableness and of the comfort of others. Wells seems sometimes to justify them, or at least to think that nothing else is to be expected. His ethic is on the Pagan level, not the Christian, and he shows it snapping under strain. One craves a little more sense of the supreme satisfaction to be found in the subordination of natural impulses for the sake of fellowship with The Invisible King. Yet with all exceptions, the idea of Discipline dominates his social thought. For he is out for liberty, and he knows, to use his own fine phrase, that there are many "spendthrift liberties which waste liberty." He wants a civilization in which men shall have chosen to be controlled, and shall therefore be, not victims of circumstance as now too often, but free to prove that character is destiny by making their own choices on noble lines.

In "New Worlds for Old," he has an illuminating description of different types of socialism — Utopian, Revolutionary, Administrative, and Constructive. He rejects the first three, but retains some elements from each: from Utopian socialism, the vision without the sentimentality; from Revolutionary or Marxian socialism, the scientific method without the endorsement of violence or the class war; from Administrative (by which he means English socialism of the practical type developed by the Webbs), the stress on gradual concrete advance, through reorganization from the municipality out. But his own way of thinking, which he

calls Constructive, is stronger and finer. It transcends all these, while it builds on them. He presents a social ideal in which the unreasonable fatalism of the Marxian is outgrown, and the Fabian "over-accentuation" of the institution is escaped; an ideal of a free world, called into being largely through the devotion of men of the constructive professions, which shall give man's spirit such a chance as it has never had before.

What will that world be like? "A Modern Utopia" is the answer. This is in some ways the most inspiriting Utopia ever written. To compare it with More's is to measure the distance travelled by thought toward a union of the practical with the perfect. More showed a small island on the defensive; Wells presents a planet, for he understands that only in a unified world-state can any community work out its own ideas untrammelled. More showed a static society which impresses most people as deadly monotonous. Wells presents Utopia in process — an experimental society, in which forms continually change — a race, as in old Langland, on pilgrimage to truth. More was not much occupied with the personality of his citizens. Wells is occupied with nothing else, and he suggests a rich variety in types, some finer, some baser, but all developing under conditions in which mean incentives are largely removed, and each intrinsic quality has its chance.

And above all, Wells provides for leadership as More does not. To escape mastership while developing leadership, is surely one formula under

which the social impulses of democracy might be summarized. This latest of important Utopias reverts to the earliest; as Plato's "Republic" has its Guardians, Wells's has its Samurai. In them, discipline has done its perfect work: discipline chosen from within, not imposed from without. There is ample luxury in Utopia, but the Samurai will have none of it. Free from all obsession of selfishness and from all trivial self-indulgence, they are men and women competent to carry the race on to nobler days.

Perhaps this conception, which has already had much influence, may prove the best contribution to the future of Wells's eager genius. The idea of Leadership is the germ of all his later work. It draws him on into a conception of life, aristocratic, indeed, but in a sense perfectly consonant with his earlier tendencies. He has outgrown labels; his desires, like those of Arnold, set toward spiritual preparation for a new day. His essays and novels since 1914 show him ardently seeking to conceive the competent, the consecrated people, who by finding themselves shall release the world from bonds.

IV

Whatever Wells calls himself, his whole order of thinking is socialistic. But there are writers entirely logical in rejecting the socialist label, and they are not the least brilliant and readable among our socially disposed men of letters. In this group, the names of Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton come first to mind.

Belloc, in his most important book, "The Servile State," registers like many recent writers the fear of a coming civilization where decent living conditions shall be secured to every one, at a general cost of freedom. He would seem in this contention to follow Herbert Spencer's able attack on socialism as the Coming Slavery; but it is first and foremost the actual capitalist order which Belloc sees headed straight in this direction. He has no more respect than our other writers for "The dreadful moral anarchy against which all moral effort is now turned, and which goes by the name of capitalism"; and unless some new ideal intervenes, he thinks that this moral anarchy will fall of its own weight into a condition in which the few Possessors will have purchased their power by ensuring material comfort to the vast number of enslaved workers. Yet if he distrusts capitalism, he is no friend to socialism, for to him it would fall under the same condemnation.

Belloc is a Roman Catholic; the confiscation of the monastic lands under Henry VIII, rather than the industrial revolution, is to him the beginning of our present evils. The Middle Ages have laid their spell on him, as on Ruskin, on Morris, on our own American Ralph Adams Cram; he sees them in rose-color, as the one epoch of true freedom. What he wants is a return to "the Distributive State," as he calls it; that is, to something like peasant-proprietorship, private property divided into a great number of small holdings, in place of either the existing monopoly of wealth by the few, or the socializing of wealth in the direction of collective

ownership. But Belloc has little hope for society unless the former sanctities reassert themselves, and the Church becomes once more the guide of human destiny. He weaves his argument well, and writes with cogency. Is his book literature, or sociology? One hesitates a little in opinion, as one does about the clever controversial writings of another opponent of socialism, W. H. Mallock.

But one does not hesitate in the case of G. K. Chesterton. What invigorating, re-creative books he writes — and all in the interests of those well-accredited ideals, domesticity and religious orthodoxy! We may well be grateful for a man who can approach hoary and obvious institutions with the excitement of the discoverer, who can demonstrate that there is fascination in what is old. After the bitter exposure of family life in Butler and Shaw, it is good to meet Chesterton's wholesome faith in marriage. After the tacit assumption common in young writers that the religious experience of the race must be tossed on the scrap-heap, it is reassuring to find a man actually believing that the Christian Church, with all its futilities, is a real channel for the divine force.

But Chesterton is a curious kind of conservative. Take his views on property, as given in "What's Wrong with the World"; they are not so very different from those of Shaw and Wells. Neither of these two writers wishes to rob any of us of what we can really enjoy by using it, and Chesterton quite agrees with them in having so much respect for property that he is filled with grief and rage by the

obstinate fact that under present circumstances not one man in ten can have any. His remedy, like that of Belloc, and of the peasants, in Russia, is not socialism; it is a wider distribution, peasant-proprietorship if you like. But we must not discuss the technical schemes which all these men suggest.

Chesterton's questioning starts with the family; his thesis is "the homelessness of Jones," and his great desire is to give Jones a home. His message to the Tory runs: "If he wants the family to remain, if he wants to be strong enough to resist the rending forces of our essentially savage commerce, he must make some very big sacrifices and try to equalize property." That is not exactly a conservative message.

When he discusses the woman question, however, his ideas cannot be described as radical. They are a kind of continuation of Ruskin's ideas in "Sesame and Lilies." The business of women is a fireside business; they are to develop a charming "comprehensive capacity," leaving the harsher duties of specialization and thorough knowledge to the men. Not many women will fall in with the suggestion; but neither will they approve the more radical writers. For all these social idealists envisage life from the man's point of view, and when they write about women not one of them escapes an overstress on sex. Sex is important, but it does not constitute any larger element in life for the woman than for the man. And some women are not meant for firesides.

But in one way, Chesterton transcends both

radical and Tory — and that is, in the breadth of his outlook. No one can love paradoxes as he does without appreciating the intricacy and mystery of the forces playing on human nature: he understands that the ideal he fights may be as real an instrument of truth as the ideal he furthers. So, in "The Man who was Thursday," one of his most arresting performances, he presents all anarchists of the world as, unknown to one another, agents of the secret police; and the arch-conspirator in the story, the awful Sunday, is discovered at last to be the Almighty Lawgiver Himself. Revolution and Law are alike the servants of life; and life is to be trusted, thinks Chesterton. For Chesterton is a Christian.

More voices than can be noted greet us as we travel down the years. There are men driven of the Spirit to defend this or that theory, whether it be peasant-proprietorship or the coöperative Commonwealth; and sometimes they lift polemic into literature, but not always. There are other men who leave dogmatism alone, and play the part of interpreter rather than partisan. These are seldom so popular in their generation, but they may conceivably mean more to the future.

G. Lowes Dickinson is one of the ablest among these dispassionate critics. His artist father of the same name, friend of Maurice and Ludlow, was in the intimacy of the splendid group that stood for a spiritual foundation to social progress during the fifties; the younger man is sensitive to every attitude, and in his earlier books commits himself to

none. Even these books clearly show liberal sympathies, and since the war broke, Lowes Dickinson has taken a firm stand among English radicals. But his "Letters of a Chinese Official," his "Justice and Liberty," his "Modern Symposium," breathe a rare spirit of detachment.

The first of these probably borrows its idea from Goldsmith's "Citizen of the World"; it comments on our civilization from the point of view of a supposed Oriental, with sly humor that makes us wince. But it is in the other two books that the author finds the form of expression most congenial to him — the imaginary conversation. Not every one likes this form; but those who have savored it, from the time of Plato, find especial charm in its dramatic presentation of thought. Ideas here are not treated as finalities; they are alive, they flower spontaneously from the soil of diverse personalities. The speakers are known to us by their thinking, not their action; but they can be very vivid; and they strike sparks from one another in the refreshing dynamic fashion of real clever conversation; the subject is developed, not by one mind looking back over it, but by many minds making discoveries as they go along.

In "Justice and Liberty" the discussion probes deep. No one can read it and retain the pleasant illusion that the two terms are necessarily akin, that justice will naturally result from liberty. It is suggestive to compare the imagined speech of the statesman at the end with the speech of a prime minister which concludes Carlyle's pamphlet on

"The Present Time," written just after the revolutionary year 1848; one sees how far thought has travelled.

But the earlier book, "A Modern Symposium," is easier reading, and it affords an admirable means of looking back over the wide tracts through which nineteenth-century minds have wandered. For the author brings together, in the garden of a country house, representatives of all the attitudes which were salient in Victorian England. Sometimes the originals of the portraits are plain, always the types are familiar. He sets them talking about the social outlook; and they catch, often with extraordinary felicity, the very accents of their prototypes. Here are the older men: Lord Cantilupe speaks first, the fine old Tory landowner, withdrawn from public life in disgust, and asking only to be left alone on the land with his villagers, in a good feudal relation which will last his time. Next come two great antagonists: Remingham, the Liberal prime minister, an obvious portrait of Gladstone, and the Jew Mendoza, Remingham's rival, whose words have the very tang of Disraeli's rhetorical yet penetrating eloquence. Then speak the younger men: Allison, the socialist of the Webb type, earnestly convinced that society can be saved by multiplying officials and organization; and McCarthy, most lovable of anarchists, who suggests Kropotkine in his thinking if not in his person. His poetic passion fairly carries us off our feet, till Martin the critic in whom the author's own attitude may be felt, brings us back to earth and demolishes all the pre-

vious speakers. The biologist has his turn, with a stress on breeding, and a confidence in progress; the clever man of letters Ellis shows by the sad example of the United States that progress is an illusion; the pessimist, who "plays through to the end" the tune of negation, expresses his bitter despair; the poet Coryat, who does not believe the world is bad and does not care a snap whether it progresses or not, so long as every instant of it is charged with such exquisite delights, raises our spirits; the expatriated Hedonist, selfish, intelligent, aristocratic, finds satisfaction regardless of what happens to the masses; the Quaker witnesses gently — but with rather less effect than the other speakers — to eternal things; and finally, Lowes Dickinson gives the last word to the philosopher Vivian: "March, then, men in man.... Doubt is a horizon, and on it hangs the star of hope.... Science hangs in a void of nescience, a planet turning in the dark. But across that void Faith builds the road that leads to Olympus and the eternal Gods."

## V

Our studies have carried us close to the war: to the catastrophe unforeseen by most of our writers, in the presence of which theories grew pale, in the shadow of which we shall long move. Most of the men whom we have discussed continued to write while the war went on and after. Shaw, Kennedy, Wells, Chesterton, Belloc, Lowes Dickinson, have, it may be hoped, still books in store. It is evidence of the insight into reality of their early work that

not one of them has fundamentally changed his social attitude. There has been shock, there has been expansion; new emphases, new issues, have appeared; but old ideals and old analyses have held their own. It is not for us here to follow these men further.

Meantime, even before the war new figures were attracting attention; and though most of the work of these writers belongs to the present day, we may conclude with a few words about them. Two of the most interesting are the Irish poet, mystic, reformer, George Russell, who is known as A.E., and the philosopher and mathematician, Bertrand Russell.

"I am by profession an artist and man of letters," says A.E. in "The Inner and the Outer Ireland," "and I find the consolations of life in things with which governments cannot interfere, in the light and beauty the earth puts forth for her children. The words 'republic' and 'empire' are opaque words to me." But just because his desires are set supremely toward "the entry of humanity into the divine mind," he has cared for the well-being of Ireland. And no one has written more wisely, beautifully, and practically of that strange beloved land. A.E.'s writings may be considered the last word of English letters in the long painful story of the Irish struggle for freedom.

A.E. has served sagaciously and effectively in the development of coöperative farming in Ireland, and his writing abounds, not in doctrinaire generalizations, but in close analysis of actual facts. He

passes harmoniously from dry details about dairies to phrases luminous with mystic ecstasy. He holds the firm conviction that the national being to which Ireland must be true is a supersensual reality, and that in working for the seemingly opposed ideals of solidarity and freedom, men are divinely supported, by "energies as real as those the scientist studies," "which descend into the soul and reinforce it with elemental energy."

Not only in this Irish mystic, but in all the writings of our day, there is a notable stress on spiritual values as the one criterion of measures of reform. The old Church has not been silent. The movement of the eighties, described in the last chapter, has gone on stronger and stronger; religion has begun to realize the revival to be hoped for from humble contact with labor. The Industrial Christian Fellowship, for instance, with a stirring and radical programme, counts its members by thousands, or rather refuses to count them at all. But this energy manifests itself rather in life than in literature.

Meanwhile the demand for freedom sounds nowhere clearer than in the words of those apart from Churches altogether. Even in the votaries of Marxian socialism, it appears in their own despite. Carlyle's old cry is repeated: it is not for his sorrows that they lament for the poor, but that the lamp of his soul should go out; and the soul of the rich also is dusky to their gaze. Metaphor apart, a restless spirit is abroad; it gropes, seeking for release. Release from the intolerable burden of

compunction which weighs more and more heavily on sensitive men; release from the impediments, inhibitions, and false emphases which afflict us all. Our earlier idealists, from Carlyle to Arnold, turned to the State as a refuge from these woes; but even before the Great War, the State had become less of a name to conjure with. All recent thinkers are terrified lest the advance of democracy mean the triumph of the Servile State; lest a sordid, materialized, and official-ridden mediocrity be our destiny. Thought recoils from this bureaucratic conception, toward a more liberalized and individualized ideal, in which freedom for the artist, the poet, the philosopher is as ardently protected as material comfort for the worker.

And with this more personal, more psychological, stress comes a wider dream of democracy. The economic problem becomes more pressing, as the workers become, obviously, not a mass to be provided for, but a force to be reckoned with; and the relation of economics to the larger politics grows plain. It was the war which suddenly, by violent shock, startled the man in the street into the international vision; but even before the war, prophetic natures had seen that no nation and no class lives to itself, and that social salvation cannot come through isolated experiments, but when the whole race works together in brotherhood.

The passion for freedom realized in world-fellowship inspires the brilliant work of Bertrand Russell. His "Political Ideals" and his "Proposed Roads to Freedom" present an admirable summary of the

diverse modern speculations which, reëchoing the familiar indictment against things as they are, are timid about many proffered remedies and try to break new ground for social progress. Russell is an interpreter. Reading such books as his, we live in an atmosphere of eager experiment, of adventurous daring. Idealism, often disconcerting, often dangerous, is out in the world to-day, working in the very stuff of life. The centre of struggle is no longer where social radicalism encounters the old capitalistic theories; for radicalism itself divides into myriad forms, antagonistic to one another. The issues faced are incalculably more fundamental, more vital, than they were sixty years ago. To play our part aright in these great days, we must turn to the thinkers for guidance. Their message is confused, but through it sounds the music of our marching orders. For all, with one accord, summon those who hold the future in their keeping to continue the eternal pilgrimage

> "On to the bounds of the waste.
> On to the City of God."

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